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*The ART*  
*of STAYING*  
*HAPPILY*  
*MARRIED*

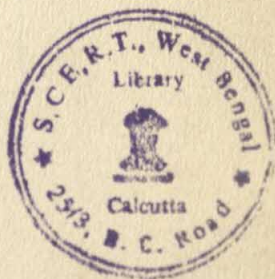


Robert W. Burns

*h*  
The ART  
of STAYING  
HAPPILY  
MARRIED



PRENTICE-HALL, INC.  
Englewood Cliffs, N.J.



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This book is dedicated to my wife,  
*Agnes*  
who taught me how to stay happily married  
and to our children  
*Georgine Bush and Robert W. Burns, Jr.*  
*Frank N. Burns*  
*Virginia Burns and Carl R. Anderson*  
*Ellen Ison and J. Bricker Burns*

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*PART I*

INTRODUCTION

# 1

## *What's Wrong with Our Marriages?*

 **W**HILE I WAS only nineteen, and still an undergraduate student in the Bible College at Drake University, I served as student pastor of a small church in a suburb of Des Moines, Iowa. The first funeral I was asked to conduct was of a man who was thought to have taken his own life because his wife had been unfaithful.

In that first church and during three other pastorates extending over forty years I have had many additional opportunities to observe the irreparable devastation caused by marital unhappiness. I soon resolved that each time I solemnized a marriage, I would do everything in my

power to make that marriage work and that I would gladly help any couple to have a finer home. For many years I have asked those about to marry to consult me before and after their wedding. They have been encouraged to see me within thirty days after the ceremony and to come back as often as they wished. In our conferences prior to the wedding I have often said, "My wife and I were married thirty-five years last June. When you have been married as long as we have, I hope you will be as happy as we are, and have four fine children to add to your joys. But in the meantime you may have some of the difficulties which are perfectly normal for married people to have. If you do, please grant me an exclusive franchise on the 'complaint department' of your home. I will take a life-long interest in your home, but please don't let any amateur mechanics monkey with it. When you join some church together, let that pastor really be your pastor. Go to him, of course, instead of me, for nearly all ministers take a great interest in the homes of their members. The main point is to keep whatever happens in your home secret and sacred from all except a person who is experienced to help you. Stay away from your friends, neighbors and relatives with your troubles. Don't go first to a lawyer's office (though it is true that many of the legal profession make a sincere effort to reconcile those who come to them). You have come to my study to start your home. Please come to see me—together—before you discuss your differences with anyone else. Remember, it is just as much a minister's business to help you *stay* happily married as it is to marry you in the first place."

#### *WHAT I HAVE TRIED TO DO*

This book is for those who are already married and want to explore further the art of living happily together. In writ-



ing it, I have drawn on forty years of experience as a pastor and thirty-five years of my own married life as well as the experience of many other persons in this, the greatest of all arts.

I have tried to share with you the insights I have gained in counseling many thousands of people over a period of four decades.

This book is not an effort to persuade unmarried people to start a family. We do not need more marriages. We *do* need more homes where the wholesome conditions of healthy family life prevail. That is the purpose of this book! To teach the art of staying happily married.

But those who are preparing for marriage may also find here that a long look ahead makes possible inspiration and wisdom which will encourage an enduring and happy marriage.

I have discovered that five basic human needs are met when we are happily married. These are the needs for:

- 1) Acceptance
- 2) Affection
- 3) Association
- 4) Achievement
- 5) Adventure

We stay happily married when these needs are met.

Each of these needs has its neurotic counterpart:

- 1) Rejection
- 2) Domination
- 3) Withdrawal
- 4) Destruction
- 5) Retreat



I have found it helpful to keep in mind the five positive goals of a wholesome home—acceptance, affection, association, achievement and adventure—and to compare these with the neurotic needs I also see for rejection, domination, withdrawal, destruction and retreat. I ask myself, "Is this person who is telling me his problems seeing them clearly? Are his normal human needs being adequately met? In what ways? How may his human needs be fulfilled better? What neurotic needs does he have? How are these expressed? What can be done to reduce these neurotic needs to manageable limits?"

There are, of course, other needs which people have, but the needs of which I speak are those that a minister of the gospel can best help people to meet. I do not try to dig deeply into hidden conflicts. I am a pastor, not a psychiatrist. These are the five needs that Christ helps people to answer in their lives. When these needs are really satisfied, the home is reasonably happy.

Instead of thinking of these as five *human* needs we may profitably consider them as five major methods by which the interpersonal relations of a man and wife with their children are deepened and enriched toward one another by the minister of religion. We *accept* one another as worthwhile persons; we respond to each other with *affection*; we *associate* together with many mutual interests; we *achieve* certain goals which to each of us are valid; we seek together for fresh *adventures* to restore the radiance and sparkle of our attractiveness to one another. Many of the couples I have seen in various stages of marital conflict are simply bored with one another. Sometimes they fight because they have nothing else interesting to do.

Marriages, like individuals, may mature through normal development or may be arrested at any stage. This is why,

after the chapters on the needs to be met in marriage I have written three chapters on the usual periods of a normal marriage:

- 1) The Early Years
- 2) The Middle Years
- 3) The Later Years

The book closes with some words of guidance and inspiration to those bereaved: "How to Live Happily When the Home on Earth Is Broken."

### THOSE WHO COME TO ME

In our romantic fashion we talk about holy wedlock, but to a multitude of husbands and wives marriage would better be described as Unholy Deadlock.

As I have watched them, the people having conflicts in their homes can be classified in three groups.

First, there's *the smart set*, the Hollywood-Reno-Mexico-Florida crowd, who pattern themselves on what they think is fashionable. They married without "burning their bridges behind them." No complete commitment was ever made. One or both of them understood from the start the marriage could be broken. So far as my own work is concerned, I have been a failure (with few exceptions) in reestablishing their homes on a permanent basis.

Sometimes I have asked myself why such persons come to me at all. Often one of them will say, "My lawyer mentioned that you had helped some of his other clients start over again and we came to see what you can do for us." This in itself is a basic misunderstanding of what any minister can do. I can't "do anything for them." All I can do is help them to help themselves. That also is the purpose of this book. The



decisions must be made by them if they are to be permanent. The solutions must be consciously accepted by *both of them* if they are to be successful.

I sense a sort of "dare" in the attitude of these couples. Beneath their spoken words I seem to hear an unexpressed attitude, "OK wise guy—keep us married if you can! We dare you to do anything about us!" And of course I can't.

Years ago I used to receive suggestions, "If you would only go to see Mr. and Mrs. Jones, you could help them." I would patiently take down the name and address and go to see the Joneses, but most of those efforts were wasted. Unless people want to be helped, a pastor himself is helpless.

A second group of couples on the road to the divorce court is composed of those who "*married in haste and repented quickly.*" Before solemnizing their marriage I ask each couple, "How long have you known each other?"

A very attractive couple came to me several months ago from a neighboring state. They knew very little about each other. I encouraged them to wait but they insisted on being married. They promised to come to see me together if the home I helped them to start was ever threatened. Within a month she was back to tell me of his prison record. They have separated and he is back in jail.

Here is how one of the outstanding authorities in family life, Dr. Leland Foster Wood, has expressed his opinion about the cause of these hasty marriages. "Because the times are so upset, many persons are inclined to grasp all the more eagerly at any relationship that seems to promise dependable and satisfying comradeship. This is one reason why some young people who have only known one another for a short time are rushing into marriage. They feel the lovelessness and distress of the world and crave the emotional security of being 'settled



in life.' Moreover as normal opportunities for courtship are so disrupted, some people feel that they will be left out in the cold if they do not act promptly and grasp whatever happiness they can get."<sup>1</sup>

One minister was met at his door one day by a strange young man and woman. The young man said, "Pastor, can you marry us in a hurry? We have to make it snappy 'cause we're starting on our honeymoon on the two o'clock train."

The third group is made up of *those who want to stay married but don't know how*. They began quarreling soon after their wedding was over on one issue, such as alcohol, use of money, in-laws, or sex, and the original point of difference was quickly enlarged to include a far wider area of conflicts. A general "free-for-all" battle may be on but these people can be helped because they want to be. Their problems grow out of the realities which they face or are the product of relatively mild personal maladjustment.

### SPEAKING OUT ABOUT DIVORCE

Thousands of letters are published each year in "advice to the lovelorn" columns in the daily papers, revealing the acute unhappiness of modern homes. Apparently millions of other women and men read ~~these~~—presumably because they find their own attitudes and problems stated. Our world seems to have an abundance of families threatened with divorce.

I have seen a few unfortunate combinations of persons. They just never should have been married in the first place. I have been puzzled about how they ever decided to be married. They don't understand themselves or each other and are unable to communicate the essential ideas about themselves to one another. They need help badly but the difficulty

usually is that they don't recognize the need or they are unable to find anyone who is competent and who will take the time necessary to help them.

Many people who read this will probably expect that as a minister I will denounce divorce and advocate methods for keeping people who want to break their homes from doing so. As I see it, the issue is not helped by making divorce either easy or hard. The main point is to help people to want to stay happily married, to teach them how to solve their own problems, to promote the basic insights with which they can work out their own solution "for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

One of the popular misconceptions is that divorces destroy homes. Divorce is the *result* of a broken home, not the cause. Divorce is the recognition of what has already happened. Judge Paul W. Alexander in the American Bar Association Journal for February 1950 declares, "In the last 15,000 cases coming before me, the marriage had failed, the family broken, the spouses separated an average of over two years before coming into court to get their divorces. According to the statistical department of a large insurance company, in 1947 when about a half million divorces were granted, over two million spouses were separated—their marriages apparently dead, their families broken—without benefit of divorce."<sup>2</sup>

Certain facts about broken homes may help us to think clearly if we keep them in mind. Divorce is higher in cities than in rural areas, more frequent among childless couples than with those who have children, more common among natives than among immigrants, less frequent among the middle class than either the very rich or very poor. A majority of divorces are now granted on demand of the wife.



The four most popular alleged causes of divorce are desertion, cruelty, adultery and intemperance. The actual causes seem to be the immaturity of the persons involved, hasty and inconsiderate marriages, the improved social status of women, the growth of individualism and free love, the influence of unfavorable economics (poverty, husband away, etc.), the increase of popular learning and the lack of religious convictions.

The conventional remedies are: first, uniform marriage and divorce laws; second, courts of domestic relations; third, equal sex morality; and fourth, improved economics. Any of these would improve our conditions but all of them put together would far from solve our problem. This book will describe a few aspects of this complex situation and indicate some of the appropriate steps at each special point from the viewpoint of an active pastor.

Judge Jesse Wood of the Superior Court of the Atlanta Judicial Circuit, in a private discussion of the legal aspects of our marriages, said to me, "The courts are not a character building agency. It is the business of the courts to hold the line until the churches and the schools can catch up." I wonder sometimes if the churches and schools are "catching up," or if we are dropping further behind each year?

The mere refusal of a divorce settles nothing. What are people whose home is threatened going to do constructively to improve their family life so that both will *want* to stay married?

Let's try to get a better perspective on this whole problem by listening to the Supreme Court of Ohio in the case of Harter versus Harter: "Perhaps there is no statute in Ohio more abused than the statute concerning 'divorce and alimony.' Perhaps there is no statute under which greater im-



position is practiced upon the court and more injustice done to individuals . . . The hearings are generally 'ex parte.' Witnesses friendly to the applicant are examined, and it is almost, if not utterly impossible, for the court in most cases to arrive at the real truths of the case . . . Of the great multitude of cases which are before this court, I am confident that by far the greater number are not [meritorious]."<sup>3</sup>

The significant fact here is that this decision was given in 1832. That's right—1832. It was not 1932 but 1832 when the divorce rate was less than one-tenth what it is now and the volume perhaps one-fiftieth. Yet the fundamental conditions in the courts are still as they were described in 1832.

In the United States we now have one divorce each year for every four marriages. For instance, in 1959 in our country, 1,494,000 new homes began and 397,000 homes were broken by divorce. Divorces make the headlines but back of those front-page stories has been an astonishing increase in annulments. Now for every 100 divorces at least 40 annulments are granted. In New York state, for example, in 1935 there were only 384 annulments. Ten years later there were 4,902. By contrast, in 1932 over the entire United States there were only 3,900. During the four years from 1942 to 1946 annulment proceedings increased 178.5 percent while divorces increased only 72.2 percent. In our whole country during 1959 we had 12,603 annulments reported with figures received from only a few states.

The advantages of breaking a home by annulment are obvious. The man or woman who obtains an annulment may thereafter consider himself as never having been married. No church laws stand in the way of another marriage.

Six general grounds are usually recognized as the legal

basis for such annulments—fraud or misrepresentation, force or duress, bigamy, incest, impotency and mental incapacity. Next to fraud, the most prevalent case today is that of the young wife who charges her husband is unwilling to have children after a solemn pre-marital promise to do so.

Rev. Edgar Schmiedeler, director of the Family Life Bureau, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington, D.C., has written: "Of primary importance is the question, 'What is an annulment?' It is a declaration, based on fact, that no marriage had actually taken place in the case of the parties concerned. In the great majority of present-day alleged annulments this definition does not apply. The marriages were real marriages and there is no basis whatever to declare them null and void."<sup>4</sup>

Margaret Gilbert Benz, professor of sociology at New York University, puts the matter in clear words, "Annulment is necessary in a state when the divorce law is strict. Sometimes it is necessary to terminate bad marriages. We should be less concerned with making stricter laws and more concerned with making better marriages."

Where shall we obtain light on the darkness of so many modern homes? Where shall we learn the necessary skills for the art of staying happily married? Certainly the careful studies of broken homes, the search for understanding of failures, the ceaseless quest for insight into the hidden depths of the human mind are all relevant but the one supreme source for marital wholesomeness is in the homes that have succeeded. So much has been written about abnormal homes that I want to express clearly that *this book takes its bearings mainly from families who have won a reasonable measure of success—the home in which I grew up as a child, the family*

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my wife and I have sustained since 1927, the wholesome little homes of the congregations I have served and in the community of Atlanta where I do most of my work. These happy homes have been the result of the love of God and the law of God accepted and followed by the people involved. Here is how the Word of God speaks to us today, not only out of the Bible but also with great emphasis out of the actual situations where we human beings most closely associate with each other.

The popularity of books on subjects similar to this one has tended to make some married people think too much about themselves. Looking for trouble all the time, they often find it. Excessively observant, they become spectators in their own homes. To such people I say, "Relax and enjoy yourselves." Many of these people cannot do this by themselves and need an opportunity to establish with some person a relationship free from hostility. Some of them I send to a clinical psychologist or a psychiatrist for the kind of personal reorganization these more competent professionals can help individuals to achieve, but the less disturbed persons I gladly work with myself.

Many couples have their difficulties made more acute by the devastating social changes of our culture. Moving from the country to the city makes special problems which can be helped by friendliness from church members. The employment of wives outside the home creates added strains, etc. These also are the couples who can be helped most by a minister. Their troubles arise from the real situations which they face.

Another group heading for the rocks of family destruction is made up of the severe mental cases, who are promptly re-



ferred by me to one of our several competent psychiatrists. A few of them have continued to come to me at the same time that they received treatment from the psychiatrist, with whom I was glad to work, reinforcing, where I could, the course of remedial procedures which he recommended and giving a steady support of Christian acceptance from which they can draw strength.

### *YOUR HOME IS IMPORTANT*

Civilization began in the home. The primary institution of all our civilization is the home. Historically speaking, the home came first.

Before there ever was a nation, there were homes. While men thousands of years ago still ranged in small, loosely associated groups, there was a primitive home. The state is the association of families for common welfare and today its greatest task is to safeguard the home.

Before there ever was a church, there were homes. The church is the organized expression of our religious development and today the church endeavors to sanctify the home. The first Christian Churches met in homes.

Before there ever was a school, there were homes. The school is the institution through which the younger generation is led into a sympathetic sharing of the best experience of the past and present. Much is done in the schools to prepare for better home life the young people who throng the classrooms. Long before there ever was a formal school with teacher, curriculum and building, there were homes, maybe simple and rough, but nevertheless, places where children were prepared for the sort of conditions which then prevailed.

Civilization still begins in the home. Here is where each

new generation finds its beginning. No social order can be better than the homes. The state is an enlargement of our homes. No nation has long survived the decay of its families. Most of our instruction is received in our homes. Ask a person where he received his education and he will reply by giving the name of some college or university, but in fact most of our mental background, our emotional reactions and our strength of character were received in our homes.

The church is an expression of its homes. Church workers, as a rule, come out of homes sympathetic to religion. The best church has the best homes behind it.

Marriage is not just an affair between any two individuals. Every home affects every other home and influences the strength of our human order. All larger social units stand or fall with the home.

People living intimately together in a home are always learning from each other. Sometimes this is conscious and deliberate. More often it is unconscious and casual. A husband and wife learn much from each other. When their children arrive this mutual learning process continues with the children teaching the parents as well as the parents teaching the children. Children also learn from each other.

Whether a person lives in vain can never be measured by the external standards of money or popularity. Real success in living can only be measured by the way people face their problems, by their victory in the inner conflicts known perhaps only to each person. This achievement may be approximately indicated by the quality of their homes.

Joyce Kilmer has put this into memorable lines,

"The only reason a road is good, as every wanderer knows  
Is just because of the homes, the homes, the homes to which  
it goes."



*THE HAPPY HOME IS THE HOPE OF THE WORLD*

We need a Christian aim for the whole family. We have to a large extent become moral as individuals. We have yet to apply our standards of morality to the groups in which we live. Personally we are kind but our corporate life is often ruthless. We have had leaders in both labor and management who would not as individuals harm a hair on the head of a little child, but who cheerfully issued orders or formulated policies that threw thousands of men out of work. In similar fashion husbands and wives have decided to dissolve their homes without any consideration of the consequences in the long run on their children and other persons affected.

I believe in the possibility of fine homes. When I read the history of the origin of the home, I know how it has been nurtured in struggle and has survived the crash of empires or the decay of economic systems.

I see the homes of thousands who are fighting for their common life against false standards of selfishness. The home provides security for confused and beaten spirits. The home gives an opportunity for the wise to practice their understanding and for the ignorant to learn.

Marriage is a supreme ethical experience, the choice of a mate the most critical decision of our human life.

Christ began His ministry with His first recorded miracle at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee. All through His teaching and example we have many incidents of what a difference our Lord made in homes. "When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today!' So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. Jesus



said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house (home), since he also is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:5, 6, 9).

Jesus Himself gives us the guidance we need, "You who follow me, must love one another . . . You must know God, your Father, and love him with all your heart—your soul—your mind—your strength . . . You must seek to understand each other . . . You must work together, helping one another . . . You must share your joy . . . You must teach one another as you find wisdom . . . You must be ready to sacrifice for another's need. You must remember the words I have spoken to you, for they are spirit, and they are life."

Alice Freeman Palmer gave this testimony about her own marriage, "I don't know what will happen if life goes on growing so much better and brighter each year. How does your cup manage to hold so much? Mine is running over, and I keep getting larger cups."<sup>5</sup>

## Questions to Ask and to Answer

*For each to think through "on his own."*

HAVE I the habit of happiness or am I a chronic  
grouch?

WHAT do I consider my best and my worst traits?

How well do I understand myself?

WHAT have I accomplished as a person?

WHAT am I willing to do to improve myself?

*For each to tell and discuss with the other.*

WHAT were the happiest and the unhappiest  
events of my childhood?

WHAT conflicts did I have with my parents?

How were these handled?

WHAT is there about me which gets on my mate's  
nerves?

How have I known God personally and how can  
we share this experience?

*For both to consider together.*

HAVE we learned how to disagree without being  
disagreeable?

WHAT were the main stages in the growth of our  
love?

How can we pleasantly spend more time to-  
gether?

WHAT have we achieved so far in our marriage?

WHAT new ventures have we planned for the  
future?

## 2

### *Staying Happily Married Is an Art All Can Learn*

 **S**TAYING MARRIED happily is an art that all can learn.

"You can't change human nature," said a bright young matron in despair about her husband. The truth is that it is human nature to change. All of us are constantly changing. We vary from day to day.

The future belongs to families that are made of growing persons, not afraid of the changes that inevitably come.

There is a wide range of motives for marrying that influence the sort of problems that arise after marriage. Elizabeth and John married ten



years ago. She consented to become his wife because she wanted to show her spite against a man who had rejected her. Of course, Elizabeth and John have fought like cats and dogs ever since.

I recall a couple who married because he wanted to get away from a very unpleasant home. His parents had lived in the same house for fifteen months without speaking to one another. He finally gave up his efforts to reconcile them and married the first girl he could get to say, "Yes." Now another couple is on the way to the divorce court.

She married him on a dare! The thrill of something different was also part of their elopement to Conyers, near Atlanta. Within two weeks they were both in my study, having been told by a friend that I might be helpful. Maybe it is not too late for them. . . .

We are a nation made great largely by the great family life of our ancestors, and we may be about to throw away the most important single foundation of our real greatness. I am not indulging in the illusion of a past "golden age" of home life. "Family life is not what it used to be and never was," is a wise-crack that has real point. But something *is* wrong with our homes as compared with the family life of our country a century ago. Too many Americans are kicking around the sacred institution of the home.

The building of a new world must start in our homes. All the world knows about divorce and family unhappiness in the United States. Our improved moral leadership will be established when we restore our homes to secure strength.

The state of our marriage affects all of our being. If you are happy you are more likely to be healthy. If you are unhappy, there are usually physical consequences. Dr. Stanley Cobb "demonstrated a chain of events starting from anxiety and

conflict and ending with gastric ulcer.”<sup>6</sup> I have never known a man who died from hard work, but many who died from hurry and worry.

Most of us will not achieve outstanding success measured by the standards of money or fame. We are ordinary people with ordinary jobs living in ordinary circumstances. But there is one area in which we can achieve real distinction. *We can be successful in our family life.*

In the United States we have inherited many of the traditions of European homes but at the same time we have been free to develop a family pattern of our own. We have created a fresh approach to comradeship in marriage with life-long love and mutual growth.

A popular illusion of our culture is the romantic idea that God made one man and one woman specifically for each other. According to this, the art of staying happily married would consist simply in finding the right person. Actually, the art of staying happily married consists in finding and keeping the *right attitude* toward any person.

One of the famous conversations of history on this subject is preserved for us by James Boswell in his *Life of Samuel Johnson*:

*Boswell*: “Pray, Sir, do you suppose that there are fifty women in the world, with any one of whom a man may be as happy, as with any one woman in particular?”

*Johnson*: “Ay, Sir, fifty thousand.”

*Boswell*: “Then, Sir, you are not of opinion with some who imagine that certain men and certain women are made for each other; and that they cannot be happy if they miss their counterparts?”

*Johnson*: “To be sure not, Sir. I believe marriages in general would be as happy, and often more so, if they were all



made by the Lord Chancellor, upon a due consideration of characters and circumstances, without the parties having any choice in the matter.”<sup>7</sup>

### THE SUPREME ART IS TO STAY HAPPILY MARRIED

The art of staying happily married is the supreme art known to man, using all the other arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry. It is the greatest of the arts as the whole is always greater than any of its parts. It is the most universally practiced of the arts. Painting is done by only a few and sculpture has never been universal. The arts of poetry and music are limited, but the art of making a happy home is practiced everywhere our human race may be found. It is the greatest of all the arts, because everything that is fine and decent about our world depends on the skill with which men and women practice this art.

Success in this art means more to the human adventure than any other art or even all other arts put together. *No other contribution we may make to the world is as important as that we make when we establish and maintain a good home.* No man or woman is a failure who has helped hold happily a home together. He who has failed in this can have but a limited success in all else he may win, while he who has been victorious in his home can never be completely defeated.

A civilization is as strong as the homes of that civilization that are stable and a civilization is weak when the homes that make up that civilization are broken. There are no more ominous statistics than the facts about the breakdown of our American homes.

National defense is a mockery unless we have homes worth defending. Build cities as fair and glorious as the world has



ever seen; erect houses until there is a residence as fine as the hand of man can make it for every family and, yet, unless those who live in those cities or homes love one another and maintain their families in simple, permanent devotion to one another, that civilization cannot long continue and those houses will soon be empty shells to crumble and become desolate ruins in which some day the explorers will dig to find the reason for the destruction of that culture.

*THE OTHER ARTS TEACH US ABOUT THE  
SUPREME ART*

The art of staying happily married has much to learn from other arts. Painting has much to teach us about the art of staying married. The devotion of a painter to his work is the expression of his love of beauty. He seeks to put on canvas, some fleeting moment of imaginative insight, some feeling for a landscape, some sensitiveness of a mood in a person, some awareness of the meaning of a human experience. The greatest paintings of all the world, to me, have been those setting forth the love of a home, or the rapture of true devotion, or the dignity and solemnity of family life.

Sculpture, likewise, has much to teach us about the art of staying happily married. Just as the sculptor looks upon the block of unfinished marble, takes the chisel in his hand and carves upon that block some vision he has seen, so you and I take the raw material of human life and envision the happiness we hope to have as we practice the daily routine of common experience. We are all sculptors in the art of living. What we make out of marriage is determined by many conditions similar to those that determine what a sculptor may make out of the stone to which he sets his chisel. What does he see in his mind which he desires to create in the

stone? What patience will he exercise to acquire the skills necessary to his art?

Poetry has much to teach us about how to practice the art of staying happily married. Many of the greatest poems of the world have dealt with some aspect of our homes. Poets have sung about the happy family, the joy a husband and wife share when children come, the delight of working together at a common task. And, like the poet, one skilled in the art of staying happily married avoids the crude or coarse expressions of affection. Shakespeare spoke for lovers of all eras when he wrote his twenty-ninth sonnet:

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,  
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed  
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least;  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,  
Like to the lark at break of day arising  
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;  
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Architecture has much to teach us about the art of staying happily married, for the basic laws of building a *house* likewise are fundamental for a *home*. A firm foundation and balanced proportion are essential in the building of a structure of brick and mortar and also in the building of a family. Honest materials are needed, for you cannot build a noble building out of cheap, unworthy wood or mortar. You cannot construct a home, fair and steadfast, to stand against



the stormy winds of worry or the floods of trouble unless it is founded on the simple virtues of faithfulness and loyalty to one another.

Music has much to teach us about the art of staying married. Harmony in a home, as harmony in the sounds of good music, is based on the laws of orderly and progressive rhythms. Two of the most stimulating lines in all poetry remind me of the relation of songs to success in our families,

A woman singing in her home,  
A violet by a mossy stone.

### THREE INSIGHTS THAT ARE HELPFUL

There are three fruitful insights from the arts on how to live together so that you will *want* to stay married.

Staying married, like every other art, *is hard work*. There is a vast labor required to keep any home going. In most modern families this drudgery must be done by both the husband and wife. Some look on the work necessary to maintain a home as being of a low or inferior order. We should understand the sanctity of such labor. Time given to it is important. The woman in her home, busy about her tasks, washing the dishes, making the beds, is doing one of the highest tasks to which human hands can set themselves and when her husband helps her they are achieving together an enduring relationship. The man who cheerfully pitches in to do his share of the household chores is making possible an atmosphere of cooperation in their home. Rightly understood, our work in the home underlies the supreme art. The labor done skillfully in the home may be as beautiful in its way as the product of any other art. A popular misconception is that art is a matter of the happy inspiration of a moment or two



and all is done. On the contrary, great art nearly always is the result of long hours of hard work.

The tremendous amount of work in a home is still the most important job in the world, still basic to every other human activity, still so fundamental that no one else can take a mother's or a father's place. In the rearing of children no satisfactory substitute has been discovered for parents' time and affection around the house. The hours when a mother and child are washing the dishes may provide to the child an opportunity for casual questions which open the way for much vitally important discussion. The time when father is available for play helps form inner strength which will be essential to living now as well as later to the child.

You may look at some other couple, saying to yourself, "What a wonderful life they lead!" Be sure they too have had difficulties to surmount and problems to solve. You can have just as beautiful a home if you are willing to learn the art of staying happily married by the effort of applying yourself to the opportunity you have.

In the play, *Christopher Blake*, by Moss Hart, there is a conversation between the Judge and twelve-year-old Chris, about the divorce proceedings of his parents. "Chris, the toughest thing in the world that I know of is the relationship between a man and a woman. I tell you Chris, it's a tribute to the down-right courage and decency of men and women that so many do stick it out. I can see you expect me to have the answer. Well, I haven't, Chris. Except that maybe not many human beings are grown up enough to make a good marriage."<sup>8</sup>

*True art emerges from the individual reflection of a creative mind.* There is an aloneness about the emergence or development of music and poetry. They belong first to their creators.

The artistic is primarily the "alone." There is a similar insight in the art of staying happily married. To most of the couples I have married I have said, "Whatever happens between you two is to be secret and sacred between the two of you. Your home is to be yours. There is a sense in which you must shut the door to all others as you maintain the privacy of your own family life."

He was about thirty years old, had been married three years and had two children. His first statement upon being introduced was, "I've made the mistake of my life. I'm not in love with my wife and she doesn't love me."

During our conversation he told me that his wife had had an unpleasant home in her childhood. She resented his friends and deprived him of any association with other people. When they were married he loved her and he was sure she loved him but now he was fed up.

I suggested that his wife come to my study. When she poured out her story it was much the same as his, "Our love is dead. I am bored to death. We never go anywhere. The children are driving me crazy." When she finished she said, "Whew, I sure do feel better now that I've gotten this off my chest."

I asked her, "What do you think would help your situation?" "We need to do together what I've just done today in here," she answered. I said, "How do you think this can be done?" "Would you let the two of us come to you and talk it all over in your study with you as a sort of referee?" I agreed.

They displayed much less tension this time than they had when they came separately. I guessed that they had done a good deal of talking already at home. Since the two of them had been so critical about each other, I suggested both of



them state their gripes. This took about twenty minutes. I asked him, "What do you want to do?" His answer was, "I don't know." I asked her, "What do you want to do?" She burst into tears.

After further discussion it turned out that both wanted one month's separation from the children and from each other. Her parents took the children. She went to friends in Birmingham and he stayed home to continue on the job. In thirty days they were back together. Now they are learning how to accept each other as persons with different histories and of course attitudes that sometimes clash.

I have watched the devastating effect of husbands and wives opening each other's mail, listening in on telephone calls, and examining the contents of a pocketbook. Don't give me that old excuse, "We have no secrets from each other." Privacy is worthwhile. Sharing is important but the slightest suggestion that one of you is spying on the other will mar your joy. Share with each other all that the other is willing to share but recognize gladly that there are interests and activities which cannot be shared without destroying or limiting your growth.

*As there are symbols in all art, so there are symbols in this, the greatest of all the arts.* Any evening I have to be away, as I go up the street to the manse there will be a lighted lamp in the front window, whose radiance will welcome me. It may seem a little thing, this symbol of a lighted lamp, yet because my wife and I understand it so, it brings something of her love to me. Upon the table in the living room of our home we have two hand-carved wooden bears which we bought in the Smokies. In a playful way we refer to them as "Bear" and "Forbear." Some such symbol should be in every home to remind both of the constant need of generous attitudes to-

ward each other. A kiss on leaving and again on returning are tokens of affection. What symbols they are in the art of staying happily married! The ring given in the marriage service is another symbol. I enjoy looking at it as it graces my wife's hand. Some of you have been married many years. Remember the time you first slipped the ring on your loved one's finger. Let the memory grow strong and cleanse your heart!

The Bible uses the relation of Christ and the Church as the symbol of our relation to one another. It appeals to us to keep our family life on the highest possible level: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church, and gave Himself up for her that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that the church might be presented before Him in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27). As Christ loved the church, so we are to love each other. How did Christ prove His love for the Church? By giving Himself up for Her!

#### *THE ART OF STAYING HAPPILY MARRIED IS RELIGIOUS*

The relation between all the arts and religion has been close and mutually helpful. The church has been the mother of every art. Some of the world's most beautiful music was written for the services of the church. Many of the best statues man has ever carved have been created for the church. When you look at Moses or David by Michelangelo, or the statue of Christ by Thorwaldsen, you see art in the service of organized religion. Many of the world's most inspiring buildings have been erected for the church.



In the supreme art of all the arts, the art of staying happily married, religion is of immense importance. In the art of starting a home, we begin with God. It is He who has created us male and female. "God gives the desolate a home to dwell in" (Psalms 68:6). He has brought each couple together over all the tangled pathways of our little human lives. God said that it was not good for man to be alone and so created woman as his helper (Genesis 2:18).

The art of staying happily married requires that we continue our homes with God. Day by day we recognize His blessings in our lives. Under the guidance of God, man and wife receive the delight of a creative artist in His work as they live with one another.

The art of staying happily married requires that we conclude our lives with God. As we recognize that every home that has ever been begun must eventually come to an earthly end, we realize that our destiny is in the hand of God. Our love for one another is His love at work in us. Nothing that can happen can take from us the assurance of that great reunion that some day will be in our Father's "house of many mansions." The fine quality of Jewish and Christian homes is a demonstration of religion in action. We do not have as many as we need but there are still enough to prove what can be done.

William Lyon Phelps said repeatedly in his class lectures at Yale, "Since the greatest of all arts is the art of living together, and since the highest and most permanent happiness depends on it, and since the way to practice this art successfully lies through character, the all-important question is how to obtain character. The surest way is through religion in the home."

When the Lord Jesus was ready to reveal His power, He

chose to do so at a wedding—at Cana in Galilee. When Christ desired to teach the spirit necessary for entrance to His kingdom, He picked the smallest member of a home, a little child, and set him in the midst of them. When Christ taught the ultimate truth about God He said, “Our Father.” Many of His parables were drawn from family life and the climax of all human history is pictured as “the family of God and the household of faith.”

*PICTURES IN WORDS TO KINDLE OUR  
IMAGINATION*

A happy marriage is like mountain climbing—the climbers are safe only so long as they are tied securely together.

A happy marriage is like a ship in a storm at sea—the voyagers do not jump overboard at the first blow of the tempest.

A happy marriage is like a ladder reaching from earth to sky—we mount its rungs one by one from elemental physical attraction to the highest spiritual understanding.

A happy marriage is like a symphony of glorious music—harmony is achieved by the blending of separate notes into one expression of moving power and beauty.

A happy marriage is like the flow of a great river toward the sea—many streams merge into its unity.

A happy marriage is like the stars shining in the sky—we look up at them in the night and find our spirits lifted by the mystery of what we do not understand.



## Questions to Ask and to Answer

*For each to think through "on his own."*

WHAT do I want most of all in life?

WHAT are my most frequent emotions?

WHAT evidence am I giving my mate that I sincerely want to stay happily married?

How do I handle my destructive tendencies?

WHAT am I doing now to strengthen my own will to live at my best?

*For each to tell and discuss with the other.*

WHY is it possible that what seems wrong to me may not seem wrong to you?

WHY does each of us think he is correct?

WHERE do I fail in control of my emotions and how are you willing to help me?

WHAT am I most interested in and how can this be shared?

WHEN and why do we get on each other's nerves?

*For both to consider together.*

WHEN does our criticism of each other do any good?

WHAT good experiences has our marriage brought to both of us?

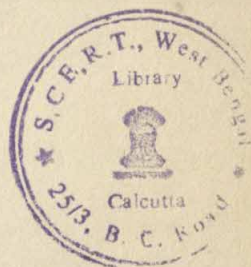
How can these good experiences be strengthened?

IN what ways can our home be improved?

WHAT kind of home do we want?

PART II

FIVE PRACTICAL NEEDS





# 3

## *The Art of Acceptance*

 PART OF THE art of staying happily married through acceptance is to learn how to accept ourselves. This is far different from being satisfied with ourselves. Repeatedly, in conversations with unhappy married people, I have heard this remark, "I'm not causing my own unhappiness. My wife (or, my husband) is causing it."

We are afraid to look at our own faults, but we will never know how to handle them adequately unless we know what they are. We fight against accepting our own responsibility for the sort of person we are.

We dislike facing our own inner problems.

Dr. Karen Horney, who has studied human behavior for a long time, has said that "it is far more pleasant to feel a righteous indignation at others than to face a problem of one's own."<sup>9</sup>

One of our basic human needs is some way to release tensions. Tension may be caused by extreme fatigue, irritations at the office or home, or many other factors. Whatever the reasons, *nobody is going to be loving and tender all the time*. There is a certain cantankerousness to human nature. The old theologians used to call it "original sin." Something sinister is deeply imbedded in each of us. There is a side to everybody that is a long way from being "nice." An idealist would claim that we should subordinate entirely this element but the intimate records of the finest persons ever known give ample evidence that we may all expect a never-ending struggle to control ourselves and to be able to accept ourselves without resentment. When we are angry, much of the time we are simply mad at ourselves, frustrated by our own failures. To recognize that this is so is an important step in accepting ourselves.

Charlotte was over-ambitious and planned each day with so much to do that she came to five o'clock every afternoon with a headache, which put her to bed. When she recognized the trick her mind was playing on her to avoid accepting her husband, she ceased to have the pain, simplified her life and was ready to greet John with fresh enthusiasm when he came home. She could accept her husband only after she had learned to accept herself. We become irritated more easily when we are physically tired yet to be mean all the time does not prove that we are overworked. The fatigue may be due to bad planning. Work we postpone or neglect can wear us out more than going ahead with the job.



If you tend to be an extrovert, cultivate the other side of your nature by setting definite periods for reading and being alone, and restrain yourself from too vigorous means of expression.

If you tend to be an introvert, force yourself to associate more with people, accept some responsibility for service not connected with your daily work or your home.

When Alice and Henry came to my study, they both agreed on the facts. The moment a difference arose between them over anything he would go to the small den off the living room, lock the door and not come out for hours. He was excessively critical of her but he could not stand the slightest suggestion as to improving himself.

His problem was that he thought only of himself. In later interviews, seeking to replace his bad habits with good habits, he assigned himself three exercises every day:

First, to refrain from talking about himself. As soon as he said the word "I," he was going to quit talking.

Second, to stop all criticism of other people.

Third, to do something every day for someone else without being asked to do it.

These are simple exercises that any person may attempt who is trying to correct hyper-sensitiveness. I do not mean that I consider any of them easy to do. Rather they are hard to do. All I am saying is that these exercises are clear-cut enough for any one to understand them. Once they are consciously chosen, in many cases of moderate hyper-sensitiveness they will bring about a marked improvement. If no improvement is obvious in three months, discuss the matter with your pastor, priest or rabbi.

Dr. Ralph G. Eckert, a psychologist working in California, wrote "Happy people make happy marriages, and *happiness* is

*best defined as appreciating what we have. To grow in appreciation is to grow mature—and lovable.”<sup>10</sup>*

### *EACH CAN LEARN HOW TO ACCEPT THE OTHER*

When couples come to me with some conflict, I often ask the one *who is, so far as I can tell, the aggressor*, “What does this problem mean to you?” I prod a bit to get as full a statement as can be given. Then I ask the other, “How does this look to you?” As each talks it often becomes clear that part of their problem is that they do not accept each other as persons. Maybe they made the mistake of marrying each other to reform one another. Respect for the differences in each other is essential to the art of staying happily married.

“I don’t expect to have my way in everything but I do wish she’d try to see how a few things look to me,” was the way in which a young husband expressed his attitude toward his wife. I asked him, “What are those ‘few things’ that are so important to you?” When he finished talking thirty minutes later I grinned at him and said, “Is that what you call a ‘few things?’ ”

Nobody can expect to have his own way all the time and also have a happy home. We take the first step in the art of staying happily married when we are willing to accept each other as persons who are important and worthwhile as we are.

Here is a guaranteed method to make your mate very happy: Say or do something to *raise* his opinion of himself. Let a wife develop the habit of glad acceptance. Let a husband never fail in the expression of his delight at what she does.

Here is a guaranteed method to make your mate very unhappy: Say or do something to *lower* his opinion of him-



self. Let a wife nag her husband for not providing more money. Let a husband criticize her constantly in little things. Never express appreciation for what each other is doing. Be brutally frank in telling each other the little or big faults you can name. Divorce is just around the corner.

A much higher percentage of failure in marriage is due to lack of desire to get along together than to a lack of either intelligence or knowledge. Some people enjoy confusion and conflict openly expressed. Some of this may be healthy but it must be kept within manageable limits. We must accept each other as persons and not try to coerce each other into conformity.

Most of the daily newspapers have a column of advice on home problems. Often the published letters ask what to do when the husband and wife have different interests. The man may like to sit by the lamp and read after dinner. She may want to go to the movie. "It gives me the jitters to sit and read," she complains.

Years ago a couple came to me from a nearby town. He was about thirty years old and gave all outward appearance of being a successful and intelligent man. "My wife and I are incompatible. We are about to enter a mutually agreeable suit for divorce but my business partner said we should talk it over with you first. I know there is nothing anybody can do about it. We just don't get along together and that's that."

I looked at them both more closely and said to her, "Tell me how you feel about this." She said, "I don't know exactly what the word incompatibility means but our real trouble is that both of us are selfish. We never give in to each other. We just don't want to get along." With that honest statement as a place to begin, we entered a process of shared exploration of the problem. During the several months they came to my

study they discovered that their home was really worth a great deal to them and the first step in the restoration of happiness in their home was for them deeply to accept the fact of their individual differences.

In seeking to understand each other's behavior an illustration such as this by Dr. L. F. Wood in *Harmony in Marriage* may help. "In childhood, perhaps we were compelled by some person to wear rubbers at play; then on a damp morning a wife lovingly insists that we wear them to the office. Before we know it, the old habit of irritation at being told to wear rubbers has flared up and the wife does not know why he reacts that way. Neither do we, in fact. Such unconscious influences on behavior are very common."<sup>11</sup>

Marion was never accepted by the social set with which her husband ran. She had plenty of intelligence and the social grace to have won a place among his friends. Yet she could never forget her poverty-stricken home. This feeling of inferiority led to a sharp tongue and gloomy disposition that drove away several who tried to befriend her. They did not accept her, largely because she was unable to accept them.

Marriage is a partnership, not a dictatorship. A partnership in order to be successful requires a recognition and respect of each for the other.

#### *THERE IS AN ART TO ACCEPTING OUR PROBLEMS*

The art of staying happily married through ACCEPTANCE involves solving real problems. Dr. Ralph G. Eckert, Director of Counseling and Guidance Services, Riverside County Schools, California, spoke about this some years ago to students at North Georgia College, "We are happy when we are successful in solving our problems. All married people



have problems. Marriage creates as many as it solves. The happy marriage is not the one in which there are no problems, but one in which two people have learned to enjoy working out problems together."<sup>12</sup>

Staying happily married through acceptance includes the art of solving problems together when husband and wife both accept each other as persons. No book can give ready-made solutions to these difficulties. In fact such a book would destroy one of the most valuable traits of character—the habit of facing situations with creative intelligence. Crises come in every home. In an emergency nobody can stop to look in a book. The methods which achieve the best results in each home must be acceptable to the people in that home.

Bill is the son of a cruel father, who often beat his son and frequently told him, "You'll never amount to anything." Bill is now thirty, lost his job recently and has withdrawn from the struggle to live, refusing even to try to get a job. His wife, Louise, is naturally worried, and has applied for employment at a department store. *She* can accept the strain of facing problems. Right now *he* does not seem able to do so.

Complain as little as possible. Most people grow weary of those who are always finding fault. Constant griping about a job or home responsibilities easily becomes a fixed habit. Accept your own part of the work of making a home as cheerful as you can—whether earning a living or doing the housework.

A less demanding and more understanding attitude will help. Never throw up to your wife, "My mother would never let a house get this messy." Most young wives simply can't be expert housekeepers and good mothers to a small child at the same time. The few wives I've seen who overemphasized a "tidy house" were mighty hard to live with. A young wife

with children deeply needs acceptance from her husband of the problems which she faces. The fact that *she* knows that *he* knows her difficulties will make it easier for her to solve them.

One young wife had no insight into her husband's problem until I told her, "A man who has received some humiliating defeat at his office needs to tell somebody about how he feels. If you won't listen with sympathy, there are probably plenty of other women to whom he can tell his troubles."

There are times when a man must listen to his wife without making too much effort to argue with her or reply to her complaints. If she's ill or nervous, if she's worn out, if she's sick, she needs sympathy rather than opposition. You might win an argument and lose your home. I have known many men and women who apparently would rather win an argument than have a happy home. This sometimes goes so far as to become the neurotic need to dominate.

Face your problems honestly and fully together. Look at the facts in your situation. To try to fool each other, or for both of you to pretend contrary to the facts may be disastrous.

One of the most interesting magazines I receive is issued by the prisoners at the Federal Penitentiary in Atlanta. An editorial by one of them has an appeal to all of us.

"Here, often we hear the term, 'snow-job.' For example, two men are talking at length. We observe them and say: 'They're giving each other a snow-job!' We mean that each of them is 'laying' a story on the other about how many Cadillacs he drove before coming to prison, how many millions he has hidden somewhere, how many pretty girls are 'gone' on him, and so on. Generally it is a story which a four-year-old wouldn't swallow. But he to whom it is being told listens carefully and reverently, beautifully sympathetic, because as



soon as the one talking concludes his snow-job, the one listening is going to lay one on him equally preposterous. They both make a sort of reciprocal agreement.

"These snow-jobs are underway here, in varied degree, at all times. We may bolster our egos, make ourselves feel important—probably there are many and unpsychologically sound reasons for so engaging, yet there is an ever-present danger that the one who is laying on the snow might believe that which he propounds as gospel. It happens often. In prison, where at best we dwell in at least a half-world of phantasy and wishful thinking, it is very, very easy to hypnotize one's self with one's own words . . . But in the end it is the hard way, for upon release, when the day of reckoning arrives, rather than being able to face the world realistically, we founder in the deep drifts of our own snow storms." (George Ryan in *The Atlantan*, May 1950.)

#### CONFLICT IS A NORMAL PART OF LIVING TOGETHER

We have had many silver wedding anniversaries in our congregation. Several times at such occasions I have heard a well-meaning wife declare that she and her husband had never exchanged a cross word. Once I overheard a cynical relation remark, "It is high time John and Mary had an argument for it would do them both good!"

A pastor of my acquaintance has acquired a reputation for bluntness. He met a couple on the street, and the wife gushed to him, "Today is our anniversary—forty years of unbroken bliss. We've never had even a little fuss." The minister paused a moment and said, "Not even a little fuss in forty years! Either you have a bad memory or you've had an awfully dull time together."

Scores of couples have come to me feeling ashamed of their quarrels. Before I marry any couple I emphasize that conflicts are natural and normal. "The bottom isn't going to drop out of your world simply because you two have a fuss. Don't discuss it with anybody else. Whatever happens between you two is to be secret and sacred. If it's really serious, come to your pastor."

I have seen times when a good family fight cleared the atmosphere. Certainly, a man can't relieve his feelings at the office. There he has to bottle everything inside. When he gets home he has to let off steam or explode.

And besides, it's fun to make up!

After a quarrel it is important for the couple to understand why this misunderstanding arose and to understand that better teamwork is needed. Through years of experience together such family fusses can be minimized, and instead of attacking each other you attack together the problems that have to be solved.

#### *HOW TO BE CREATIVE IN OUR CONTROVERSIES*

Controversy can be very creative in our homes provided it is within the assured framework of our ACCEPTANCE of one another. Dr. George R. Bach told a workshop on "The Fine Art of Marital Fighting" at the national convention of the American Orthopsychiatric Association in 1962: "Fighting is a natural activity in healthy marital and love relationships. But the style of fighting should be such as to lead to the clarification of important differences between the partners. Hurtful fighting resulting in bitterness and alienation can be avoided and changed into therapeutic fighting."

The heart of the trouble in most arguments is that people REJECT each other in the process of discussion. "You are no



good. You always have been wrong," etc. These are the ways we destroy one another.

Dr. Karl Menninger has written in "Love Against Hate" an appeal for us to accept the essential hostility that develops between lovers, ". . . The reason that the course of true love never does run smoothly is the fact that true love can endure only if the provocations of anger and resentment which inevitably develop are freely expressed and discussed and readjusted to. I certainly do not mean wrangling; both parties must make some conscientious effort to achieve objectivity and not simply indulge in temper tantrums."

What do you do in your family when you are mad at each other? Here is a system I have recommended for years—it has provided a method through which hundreds have solved their disagreements:

*First, when you are irritated, shut up.* Just refuse to say anything for a while. Don't try to discuss the issue fully the day it arises. I have had the old saying quoted to me, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." That appeal to instant debate is in error. It is far better to sleep over the anger. Talk it over tomorrow. A brief period of waiting lets you cool off, collect your thoughts into some coherence and plan for what may best be said.

*Second, prepare the setting for the discussion.* See that you two are alone. Then, put your arms around each other and keep them there until the entire subject is completed. Deeply accept him and tell him you want more than anything else to have "our home" succeed. With your arms still around each other say quietly something such as this, "John, I've something on my chest I've got to tell you. I'm all burnt up about . . ." and then proceed to define exactly what irritates you.

*Third, listen courteously to each other.* Do not interrupt. Tell each other how you feel. What do you want done to change the situation? In what ways can each of you give in to the other?

*Fourth, have another period of affectionate caressing.* You have stayed in each other's arms through all this. Never walk off and leave without a gentle reassurance of the continued acceptance you have for each other.

Here are some important ideas for you to consider in such conflict:

- 1) Exactly what is the issue in this quarrel?
- 2) Ask your mate to state fully how he looks at the problem and *listen attentively without interrupting*, which shows that you gladly accept his right to his own opinion.
- 3) Examine your own attitude. Why did you get mad? How can your own self-control be improved?
- 4) Review together the history of this fuss. Get together, if possible, on the facts of what happened. Agree on dates, persons, quotations and write them out if necessary.
- 5) Face together what can be done to solve this problem. "What are we going to do about it?"
- 6) How can we avoid the accumulation of excessive tensions in the future?
- 7) If you can't ever agree to disagree and work out a reasonably satisfactory method of getting along together, seek some competent professional help. Go together to your pastor, priest or rabbi. Make an appointment at the Family Welfare Society or with some advisory clinic. Visit your physician.

I have seen good scraps between a husband and wife accomplish these results:



- 1) Free one or both of them from previously hidden resentments.
- 2) Prepare them both to solve some problem.
- 3) Leave them with a renewed assurance of their acceptance of each other. Such open conflicts may fill a useful function in more solidly uniting two persons who "get it off our chests."

"How to fight happily" is one way to describe our subject. Here are some important don'ts:

- 1) *Don't* run away to anyone else in a family controversy. Especially, stay away from your parents or friends with stories about how unhappy you are.
- 2) *Don't* be ashamed of conflict. You are both normal human beings. Some strong differences of opinion are to be expected.
- 3) *Don't* pretend there isn't any conflict.

Some words a man must cut off his tongue before they are ever spoken to his wife are:

- 1) If she can't have children, never refer to this after the preliminary period when you both discussed it thoroughly.
- 2) Never make fun of her publicly.
- 3) Never compare her cooking, care of house or children, etc., with your mother's achievements in these fields.

Among the things a wife should never say to her husband are these:

- 1) Never criticize his parents after one frank session in which you let him know just what you think.
- 2) Never ridicule him before others.
- 3) Never throw up to him that he is not making as much money as your father.

The art of staying happily married through acceptance requires that we learn how to manage our tongues. "The tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire? . . . We all make many mistakes" (James 3:5-2).

Dr. Randolph Ray, former rector of the Little Church Around the Corner in New York City, used to give a bit of wisdom to all couples whose home he helped to start, "Now don't both get mad at the same time."

"The minute I disagree with him, he gets personal" was the way a young wife expressed her resentment at her husband's tactics. If he really accepted her as a person with the right to her own individuality he would be less destructive. Another young wife recently said to me, "Anyone can get along with Jim so long as he has his own way."

George Bernard Shaw wrote, "The test of a man's or woman's breeding is how they behave in a quarrel."

Why do we lose our tempers and act so mean? Many of us are disagreeable when we are worried. The most frequent cause of worry is a feeling of insecurity. The chronic worrier will even go out of his way to invent things to worry about.

There are physical reasons for losing our tempers such as constipation and loss of sleep. Even more prevalent are the habit patterns retained from childhood. A baby gets what he wants when he cries. Later he enforces his will by rolling on the floor and screaming.

We are more irritable just before a storm. People and animals get uneasy and lose their tempers more quickly when the barometer is falling. Our whole personal efficiency tends to be lowered. Bus and taxi passengers forget more packages. Traffic and industrial accidents mount. At such times the critically ill may take a turn for the worse. Headaches and



fainting spells increase. After the storm you may feel stimulated by the drop in temperature and the rising barometer. Family quarrels hit their peak in July, which is also tops for riots, criminal violence and hasty legislation. Oppressive heat and consequent lack of temper control are usually given as the cause.

I have seen a good many homes where relationships were so chaotic that if those conditions were to continue, all concerned would be better off if the home were broken. The bad effects on children of a home with constant bitterness can be worse than those of separation or divorce. Such cases include the father who repeatedly knocked his wife down in the presence of their child; or the sullen tension of the man and wife who did not speak to each other for over a year, sleeping in separate bedrooms, eating together, but only saying what had to be said via one of the two children; or the oft-repeated threats of divorce (of a couple who maintained over several years as the chief subject of conversation at all meals the charges and counter charges to be made in their respective petitions for divorce).

Conflicts between husband and wife create tension and, when prolonged, destroy their relationship completely. Equally harmful to children are these family feuds.

Marital conflict is not always a struggle to see who is dominant. Sometimes the fight is just as bitter to determine who is submissive. These individuals often have the history of a mother- or father-dominated man who married a mother- or father-dominated woman. One such couple, even in the atmosphere of my study, took three interviews to get out of the fuss-fight-fume attitude and then get down to business, talking over their differences instead of exploding at one another.

Some people seem to delight in arguments while others are

made acutely unhappy by debates. A middle-aged, quietly-dressed woman said to me, "I don't know what to do about my family life. My husband wants to argue all the time about everything. He nags at me constantly and I am miserable. Why can't we be pleasant with each other?"

I asked her, "Have you any idea why he wants to argue?" Her reply was that she was so anxious to live harmoniously that she found it impossible to accept the fact that any other normal human would think differently from her.

A couple who had been to me several times over a quarrel that seemed settled returned one morning. In explaining why they were back, he reported, "She keeps bringing up the subject so I told her, 'We agreed to forgive and forget,' but she said to me, 'I just want you to remember that I have forgiven and forgotten.' "



## Questions to Ask and to Answer

*For each to think through "on his own."*

AM I hurt easily in my home?  
How often does this happen?  
How much attention do I expect?  
Do I try to dominate my mate?  
Do I trample on my mate's feelings?

*For each to tell about and to discuss with the other.*

How did my parents discipline me and how are we going to discipline our children?  
IN what ways do you think your mate rejects you and what do you want done about this?  
How does he show he accepts you?  
IN what ways can this acceptance be increased?

*For both to consider together.*

How well do we understand each other's past?  
WHAT do we resent in the present circumstances of our home?  
CAN each of you put into words, TO THE SATISFACTION OF THE OTHER what the other one thinks?  
WHAT is there about each of you that makes it difficult for your mate to accept you?  
How much does it mean to both of you when other persons accept you both?

# 4

## *The Art of Affection*

 AFFECTION is not blind. It sees more clearly—not less. And because it sees more, it is willing to see less, fulfilling itself in forgiveness, as Whittier wrote:

For still in mutual sufferance lies  
The secret of true living;  
Love scarce is love that never knows  
The sweetness of forgiving.

Some time ago I heard the story, from our north Georgia mountains, of a lean, lanky “hill-billy” who went to a physician to have his hand bandaged and while the doctor did his work,



talked about how beautiful his wife was. The doctor asked, "Why didn't you bring her along?" to which the farmer answered, "Doc, it was fer yer own sake. You'd a been dissatisfied for life."

Affection often grows out of acceptance. The relation between affection and acceptance is made clear by this illustration. Mr. C. had been an unwanted child, rejected by friends, unpopular with girls. He had grown into a "lone wolf" unable to make warm, human attachments with anyone. He lived in a world without love. At 35 he came to a mental health clinic, diagnosed as a schizophrenic. The real world was so cold and unfriendly that he had simply resigned from it. At the clinic he refused to leave his room. He had created a world of imagination of his own which he preferred to the realities which were so barren. Doctors and nurses called on him with attitudes of warm human affection. They took time to play checkers with him. They'd say when they saw him, "How well you look, Mr. C." and when they left, "It certainly is a pleasure to visit you." One morning Mr. C. simply got up and walked out of his room into the real world.

"The love of a person," writes Dr. Harry A. Overstreet, "implies not the possession of that person but the affirmation of that person. It means granting him, gladly, the full right to his unique humanity. One does not truly love a person and yet seek to enslave him—by law or by bonds of dependence and possessiveness."<sup>13</sup>

Let the wife tell her husband she is proud of him for doing what he thought was right rather than falling for "easy money!" Let the husband praise his wife for her character as well as for her beauty! The approval of what is good in each other will help both to grow more desirable traits. This is

part of the art of staying happily married through affection. Such familiarity increases respect and such intimacy grows into affection!

One of the religious insights shared by both Jew and Christian is that God made each of us. You and I did not make ourselves. We did not make the one who is our mate. When this truth becomes a part of our deepest convictions we are ready to recognize one of the relations between religion and the art of staying happily married. Our love for one another is the life of God in both of us responding to the God who made us in His own image. That was part of what Elizabeth Browning meant when she wrote about her husband,

I lived with visions for my company  
Instead of men and women, years ago,  
Then thou didst come to be,  
Beloved, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,  
Their songs, their splendors,  
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame  
My soul with satisfaction of all wants:  
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.<sup>14</sup>

#### *AFFECTION IS AN ART WE LEARN EARLY IN LIFE*

While we learn to love as little children, the mature development of love depends on our willingness to look for what is lovable. The art of staying happily married requires that man and wife learn to like each other. A man was very critical of his wife to me, "I don't like her cooking, I don't like the way she dresses. I don't like the voice she uses when she talks to me." I later found he had never liked anybody—his parents or the other children in the home where he was reared. He had a lot to learn about how to give and to receive love.



A mother, needing more affection, may smother her child in excessive expressions of love. A father, ambitious but not satisfied, may hamper his child by his own disappointments or, by setting too high a standard, cause the failure of his son. This is closely related to the twisting of the need for affection, the neurotic need for rejection.

We develop the capacity for affection gradually. "Love does not come as a sudden answer to life's basic needs. We develop the capacity to love gradually through years of interaction with other people. We learn to love just as we learn to eat and to walk and to read."<sup>15</sup>

#### AFFECTION IS STRENGTHENED BY SERVING EACH OTHER

We find some of our greatest satisfactions in making others happy by expressing our affection for them in serving them. There is a universal law which works like this—*as you give more love and happiness to your life-partner, you receive more love and happiness in return.*

The affection which we strengthen as we serve each other is one of the ultimate values which makes life worthwhile. "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it" (Proverbs 15:17).

Here is the basis of our confidence, *love can grow forever.* Each married couple can continue to share what they do and think or they can drift apart simply by living each in a shell. When they serve each other with joy, their affection increases from year to year.

At the start of their home, neither is ever perfect. "One perfect individual choosing another perfect one could not be called love, but in the effort of the imperfect to rise toward perfection inheres the creative spirit of love."<sup>16</sup>

### HOW AFFECTION GROWS STRONGER

On her wedding anniversary, several years after I had helped her start a home, a happy young wife drew my head down to whisper in my ear, "Harry may not be much on looks but I know he loves me with all his heart and wherever he may be, I know I can trust him."

Chronic neglect by men of their responsibility as husbands and fathers creates undesirable home conditions.

Be loving to your wife. You were gentle and tender with her before your marriage. You told her you loved her or she never would have married you. Your wife cannot feed her heart on the love letters you wrote while you were engaged. Take your own heart out of cold storage. Tell her every day that you love her.

Pay your wife a compliment at least once every day. Make it sincere! Find something that can be praised. Surely one thing she does is right. Say so!

There will be two or three days each month when your wife will need more than ever your tender understanding. Then she requires less logic and more love. *Don't try to win arguments at this time.*

Try to understand your wife. She may be worried about losing your affection while she is drifting away from her youth. You can reassure her of how attractive she is to you. Every word of kindness will come back to you in multitudes of benefits later.

When you come home from work, volunteer to tell her some incident of the day. Talk when you get home! A husband who has lockjaw every evening makes extra problems for himself.

A father was reading an article in a popular magazine



about family life. He underlined in pencil what he thought expressed his own situation, "The father, upon his arrival home, is often greeted with greater affection by the dog than by his own children." Having thus relieved his mind he thought no more about it until he happened to leaf through the magazine a few days later. Someone else had underlined the sentence immediately after the one he had marked, which continued the thought, "For that matter, he may greet the dog with more enthusiasm than he greets his own family."

Give her a surprise once a week. This need not be expensive. Some little extra expression of affection, some small attention as offering to wipe the dishes or making the bed may give her just the lift she needs.

When both of you are employed outside the home, both should share in the labor of housekeeping. Jean's mother called me about trouble in her daughter's home. Jean and Howard had returned only two weeks before from their honeymoon. "I know they have an appointment to see you together tomorrow morning and want to ask your help. They are already having more controversy than is good and I hope you can do something to help them. Both have to work, since Howard is just starting his professional career. He seems exhausted when the day's work is over and as soon as the meal is eaten he sits down in the easy chair. He won't help Jean with the dishes and she is just as tired as he is."

Listen to your wife talk. Pay attention carefully when she says something. Her opinions are important to you. Don't interrupt when she is talking. Let your comments indicate you have understood what she said.

One man said to me while we were discussing a problem in his home, "I didn't understand what she was trying to do."

The truth of the matter is that he seldom listened attentively to anybody. Often it is difficult to understand those who are closest to us. We are so busy thinking about ourselves we do not give adequate attention to other persons. There is a great deal of loneliness, even in marriage. The frank sharing of opinions, the open revealing of attitudes and the overcoming of shyness are all very hard for us inhibited moderns to do. Affection is one way in which we reach across the wall that divides us, to communicate with one another.

Dolly and Henry are two who are heading for trouble. They have been married six years and have two fine little boys, four and three years old. Last year, during some family misunderstanding she threatened suicide. An unnecessary operation had been performed. This disfigured her and left her with a strong feeling of humiliation. Two nights ago she became excessively nervous and a sedative was administered. Her husband left my study several hours ago. In this conference he reviewed his deep concern for her loneliness (she has few friends), her insecurity (she refuses to remain in their home with the children and insists if he goes again on his weekly business trip she will return to her parents in Charlotte) and her erratic responses (she gets extremely nervous after every news broadcast). She has been to me for one conference and will return next week for another. I will work closely with her physician and her husband. She responded so well to the first visit that I am hopeful. But such persons need vigilant supervision. How will she respond, who can tell? Much depends on her. But even more, the intelligent patience and cooperation of her husband may be the difference between life and death. He tried to get an appointment with a psychiatrist but they are all busy and she resists going



there with him so I shall give "first aid" until I can see with them what is wise to do.

"How could she leave me?" he said, "I gave her everything!" This family turned out to be the spoiled wife and the sporting husband. What can be expected except a broken home? Here is a husband who uses gifts that money can buy as a substitute for the real affection his wife needs. Such wives develop a neurotic aggressiveness and often lash out in hurt feelings.

Be courteous to your in-laws. (More men than women whom I see make the mistake of picking quarrels with their mate's parents.) Frequently I hear this, "I have always loved my father and mother and they want to be good to my husband (wife) but he treats them as though they were poison." If a wife fails in loyalty to the family in which she was reared, she might be disloyal to her husband. The love a husband has for his parents is one of the qualities which make him desirable as a man.

"We are having a terrible time and it is absolutely unnecessary," a young husband told me on his first visit. "If my wife would just do what I ask her to do, there would be no troubles in our home." The only flaw in his reasoning was that she was a very modern young woman who simply could not give to any man the prompt and unquestioning obedience he expected.

These words of wisdom express the experience of many generations and are specifically addressed to men.

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your  
heart keep my commandments;  
for length of days and years of life and abundant  
welfare will they give you,

Let not loyalty and faithfulness forsake you;  
bind them about your neck,  
Write them on the tablet of your heart,  
So you will find favor and good repute  
in the sight of God and man.

(Proverbs 3:1-4)

Loyalty and faithfulness both begin at home. Affection grows when each can trust the other. Honoré de Balzac has expressed this idea in memorable words, "It is as absurd to pretend that one cannot love the same woman always as to pretend that a good artist needs several violins to play a piece of music."

*LET'S FACE IT GIRLS—YOUR HAPPINESS DEPENDS  
IN LARGE PART ON YOU*

Many women have discovered that there is a close relation between outward appearance and inner attitude. Even on the day you wash windows, stop early enough to slip into a fresh dress, wash your face and comb your hair before your husband is due home from work. Let him have a smile of welcome that comes right from the heart. Being together at the end of each day is a precious miracle.

Housecoats zippered over nightclothes, dirty hair and fingernails, unwashed faces, these are what many men see each morning as they leave home. What do they see at the office? Neatly dressed, smiling, alert women who have sense enough never to neglect their appearance.

Don't get too absorbed in the children. The mother who showers all of her affection on the baby is a foolish woman. Many an eager young mother seems to forget her husband and creates a gulf between them.

A cunningly masked form of selfishness is displayed by the mother who "gives up everything" for her children. When



they grow up they are burdened with a whining neurotic who demands constant attention with, "Remember all I did for you when you were little. It's your turn now to do for me."

Many years ago I married one of the most attractive couples of my ministry. They seemed to have "everything." Yet this home with such outstanding possibilities was wrecked because she made herself a slave to her husband and their children. Because she gave too much, the rest of the family received too much and such constant receiving weakened them.

In particular, she ruined a good man who might have become a fine husband. He would have gladly shared in the household duties but she made him selfish and demanding by doing too much for him.

Here are the instructions of the New Testament to young wives, "Train the young women to love their husbands, and children (plural), to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited likewise urge the younger men to control themselves" (Titus 2:4-6).

When your child is born, let the husband make every effort to be near you up until the moment you are taken to the delivery room. Even then, he should let you know that he is staying close by. This is one of those occasions when simply "being near" is important.

Most men are awkward in handling babies. Encourage him to give the child a bath, to hold the bottle of water or milk, to change the diaper and to play with the baby. Be patient with your husband's mistakes. He will be an even better "man about the house" when he knows you really appreciate his efforts to help.

Neither the husband nor the wife must feel that the baby is displacing the other in affection. The wise husband will

be even more attentive to his wife than previously. Little gifts will show his continued thoughtfulness. He will go to her first when he returns home instead of going directly to the baby. She in turn will see that the affectionate greetings are not ignored.

Appreciate what he does do and say. Maybe you have spent the afternoon reading a novel filled with impassioned love scenes. You envied that girl in the book and wondered why this sort of romance never came to you. Most men just aren't vocal about their deepest feelings. They would consider themselves touched in the head if they made eloquent love speeches. A good wife learns soon that her husband's, "Looks nice on you" is the equivalent of any high-sounding actor's phrases. When a man carries a heavy package home from the grocery or offers to wipe the dishes, he is expressing true affection better than a lot of romantic words.

Make an honest effort to understand your husband. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick tells this story: "Asked one day whether she understood Dr. Einstein's theory of relativity, Mrs. Albert Einstein hesitated a moment, then replied with a slow smile, 'No, I do not understand it. But, what is more important to me, I understand Dr. Einstein.'"<sup>17</sup>

Make as much effort to hold your husband as you did to get him. In any leisurely discussion of home failures, you may hear the remark that seems so wise, "Never have women been so good at catching men or so poor in holding them." That is misleading. Women who really want their men are holding them today as well as they ever have.

One wife remarked, "My husband is just an old workhorse. He is interested in nothing but his slippers and an easy chair. I know him like a book." How little she knew him is indicated by the fact that their home is broken and he has since



remarried—this time to a woman who does not make the mistake of assuming she knows all there is to know about him.

Be an attentive wife. Some homes are badly bent and finally broken by the neglect of the wife. You probably attracted him in the beginning by a combination of many qualities. You need all the assets you can gather to keep your husband's affection.

Be glad you are a woman! And stand up for your rights.

Late one Saturday evening my phone rang. "My wife and I want to see you right away," the voice on the other end of the wire said. I set aside my other plans and for several hours we reviewed the crisis in their life. He was having an affair with a woman in another town where his travels carried him each month. His wife had just discovered what was happening. She had put her foot down firmly, "I will not live with a man who is having sexual intercourse with another woman." When he faced the fact of her determination, knew that the welfare of their three children was also involved, he agreed to break off this illicit relation but only her fierce courage won this victory. Repeatedly I have seen women weakly submit to such arrangements, suffering the inner tensions which lead to ultimate breakdowns.

*WHEN THE LAMP OF LOVE BURNS LOW,  
WHAT DO WE DO?*

One of the basic truths about human nature is that part of an original setting can help to re-establish some of the emotions that accompanied that first event. This is why I have sent couples back over the route of their honeymoon, starting if possible with the church where they were married. If they do together *now* the things they did together *then*, there is

a good chance they will rekindle something of the glow that once warmed their hearts.

If you cannot actually take that trip together, sit down in some comfortable chair. Relax as much as you can. Close your eyes and remember your courtship days. Call before your mind an image of the person to whom you are married as nearly as you can exactly as that individual looked then. What clothes were worn? Be as vivid as possible and dwell on this pleasurable memory leisurely.

Take Alfred and Josephine. For twenty years they had lived together with reasonable success. Then he fell madly in love with another woman. On his second interview, I suggested he relax in the chair in my study, close his eyes and describe to me what he could remember of his wife in their courtship. After several sessions of this type of interview he found himself back in love with his wife.

I counselled one fine young couple with three active and healthy children. They had been married twelve years. "John, now that Joan has expressed herself so freely, please put in your own words what she has said and let's see if she agrees that you understand her position." In similar fashion when he said something which had obvious overtones of great meaning I said to her, "Joan, what John has just said is of great importance to him and it would mean a great deal for him to be sure that you understand him. Please put in your own words what you understand John has just said and let's see if he agrees that you really have understood what he was saying."

At first, they were very clumsy about this. When each one attempted to tell what the other thought, the result showed that neither had been listening to the other. Here is what John said after Joan had made a really moving revelation of



how much she cared for him, "I don't think she really loves me. I agree that she cares for the children. I know I am at fault in not being more patient with her. I am sure that she will never change her ways, etc." Every sentence he used in a five-minute statement began with "I" instead of "she" and there was no response at all to what she had been saying to him. She did not do any better in reply to my request for her to put *his* ideas into words acceptable to him. Both of them were too preoccupied with their own feelings to pay close attention to what the other was saying.

Near the end of the interview I called their attention to what each had missed about the other and a light of recognition flashed. "We didn't do well in that, did we? I guess we missed the whole point."

#### RELIGION AND THE ART OF AFFECTION

At the start of each life as a baby, the infant may learn to love himself or hate himself. If he is consciously or unconsciously rejected by his parents, he will hate himself and his emotional growth will be blocked. If he is accepted by those nearest to him, the possibility of his loving himself is open. On that basis of self-acceptance and self-love he can learn to love others.

*Our love is always a response.* Our capacity for affection only develops when we have been loved. The New Testament emphasizes this, "We love because He first loved us" (I John 4:19). If we may liken life to a great house, the door to the house is acceptance, but affection is the spirit with which we greet our guests. In our homes we need desperately to be *accepted*. This is why it is a tragedy that I often see when people marry one another in the hope of reforming each other.

Charles came from a broken home where his mother had finally given up the attempt to get along with his domineering father. The court awarded him to his mother except for a monthly visit with his father. His mother poured all the pent-up emotions of her unsatisfied desires upon the boy. When he came to me for help his own family had been broken two years. No divorce had been sought but he and his wife had agreed to live apart. They had seen each other only a few times and he had gone back to living in his mother's home.

The element of honesty in our affection is important at every age from infancy to the grave. If we only pretend we love, even a little child will know that our affection is "all put on for show."

The Bible contains many great love stories, but one of the most moving of them all is that of the young prophet Hosea, and his wife Gomer. Three children were born and then, for some reason which we do not know, she left him. In open violation of her marriage vows she sold her body in the streets of Samaria. Can you imagine the anguish of the sensitive young prophet? What would you do in similar circumstances?

Down into the places of sin he went, seeking her until he found her. What arguments he used or pleas he made we do not know. Only this we do know, he won her back! His love overcame the barrier of her unfaithfulness. Out of that tremendous experience Hosea saw that God too loves His people with a glorious, redemptive sacrificial love. Thus, was foreshadowed the love of Him whom Christians worship, who freely gave His life for others in expression of the love of God for us.

Our love for one another is really the life of God in both



of us, responding to the God who made us in His own image. When you sincerely love a friend, the part of God that is in you is responding to the part of God that is in him, and as each of you love each other, the love of God dwells in your human love.

*What do we humans really need? How can we help each other to satisfy more adequately the legitimate desires that we have?*

To be able to receive and to give honest affection, not the selfish love that seeks to dominate or that is possessive, is one of the glorious experiences of human life.

#### HAPPILY MARRIED WITHOUT CHILDREN

The couple without a child must make extra efforts to avoid self-centeredness and personal decay. Such a couple asked me what to do about their unhappiness, which they had suggested might be cured by adopting a baby. I said, "No competent child-placing agency would permit you to adopt a child until your own relations to each other are corrected. You must get your minds off yourselves and get busy doing together something for someone else." Certain traits in us will not develop unless we are giving ourselves to something bigger than we are individually, bigger even than our own families. This is why an active membership in some religious organization can mean so much to us. Here we link our little lives to the eternal purposes of the love of God.

The Creator has intended women for pregnancy and child rearing. Her emotional readiness for motherhood prepares her for physical pleasure and marital happiness. When she permanently rejects pregnancy, she often becomes dissatisfied and unhappy.

"What is wrong with me?" said a woman of forty in my

study a few weeks ago. "My husband loves me, we have plenty of money, but I don't know what to do with myself." I watched her closely as I encouraged her to talk. For over an hour her list of troubles went on with the accompaniment of many tears. I had known them both for about ten years. At one point I asked the question, "Did you ever consider having children?" "Oh, no," she replied, "we settled that even before we were married. I'm not going to be bothered with any dirty-faced, noisy brats around the house."

There was the point of her trouble, and the real tragedy of the situation was that nothing now could be done about it. I could not even press on her a recognition of the cause of her trouble for she could not have faced it.

#### *WE ALL NEED SOME EXPRESSION OF AFFECTION*

The need for expression of affection varies greatly. I have known individuals such as Jim who was in my study last week. His nature required frequent expression of devotion while his matter-of-fact wife thought that her work in cleaning the home, caring for the children and preparing the meals was ample evidence of her love for him. She was obviously annoyed with any effort by him to express his tender appreciation for her which required a response on her part. Such emotional non-support may be as serious as financial non-support.

Here is the place for us to consider the significance of sex in marriage. What are the details of keeping any tender sentiments alive? When we listen attentively to what each other says, when we express interest in each other's activities, when we glance at each other with appreciation, when we greet each other with kisses and embraces at morning and evening, when we remember anniversaries and other special



occasions, when extra little gifts are brought at frequent intervals, we are practicing the skills that are a proper part of strengthening our emotional involvement in each other. Above all else, in the intimate embrace of sexual intercourse we are strengthening our mutual affection.

Much of what we call civilization is a process by which mankind has used his superior brain to control his behavior, not in terms of immediate desire, but in terms of long-range happiness. Greatest happiness is achieved in marriage when the partners learn to direct their sexual impulses toward the achievement of an affectionate relation between husband and wife.

Sexual intercourse is a way of maintaining and increasing that mutual tenderness which puts a song in the hearts of married people. Here is the richest meaning of sex, the art by which the whole personality of one is enriched by the whole personality of the other.

Nothing we human beings ever do is entirely physical. Eating is more than sustaining the body. By our very nature the sex act can never be completely satisfying when it attempts to be simply the gratification of a physical desire. A complete sexual experience requires a personal relationship of dependence and trust between husband and wife.

One of the fundamental religious insights is that personality is sacred. When human beings are used simply as tools a wall of resistances rises in defiance which may easily turn into hatred.

"Sex in marriage is like the vanilla in a cake. It is not the main ingredient, but something which, when mixed with other things, gives flavor and tone to the whole. Furthermore, you do not drink the vanilla before you eat the cake."<sup>18</sup>

### THE FOUR FACES OF SEX

There are four ways in which we may think about sex: *The smutty, the selfish, the scientific and the sacred*. Let us look at each of these ways of thinking about sex.

1) The *smutty* attitude looks on sex as dirty and loves to tell filthy stories. We all see and hear more than we need of this.

2) The *selfish* attitude is concerned mainly about the excitement of intercourse. One of the errors contributing to mutual unhappiness is the popular opinion that the test of a couple's compatibility is the intensity of their mutually aroused passion. Emotion is important. People who have been married for years and feel little physical affection for each other have something very wrong with their home, but mere sexual excitement is a long way from real happiness.

The emancipation of women has stimulated a growing moral irresponsibility. Many women think they can have a job, earn their own living, avoid marriage and the work of raising a family while at the same time satisfying their sexual desires when and how they choose. "I'd be a fool to give up my independence," one 23-year-old woman told me last spring. "Sexual intercourse is no more prohibited in my crowd than shaking hands. I know a man I can have anytime I want him—and I get rid of him just as quickly!" Such women fail in happiness because personal satisfaction does not automatically follow physical contact. Real sexual delight must be associated with love and unselfishness, sharing and understanding, between a man and a woman. It has been observed in connection with promiscuous women that men "usually sense some lack of true tenderness in such women, some deep negativeness about them."

3) The *scientific* attitude analyzes and classifies sex re-



sponses and experiences. This is the student-spectator. Certainly there is a place for the person who examines every aspect of human experience and reports to others the facts about our behavior, but this attitude is not appropriate to a man and wife who are actively participating in the onward moving stream of life.

4) The attitude that sex is *sacred* emphasizes the divine origin of our physical bodies. It was at the culmination of creation that "God looked upon all that He had made and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

In the New Testament Paul writes plainly about this, "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does" (I Corinthians 7:3-4).

Also, the gifted writer of the Letter to the Hebrews in our Christian scriptures declared, "Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled: for God will judge the unmoral and adulterous!" (Hebrews 13:4).

Though love has its physical side, the success of the physical depends upon *spiritual* factors. "The fruit of the spirit," wrote Paul, "is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22).

These are the essential attitudes which lift us above the animals and transform our sexual intercourse into a holy passion. "Love" is intelligent goodwill. "Joy" is the natural overflow of our appreciation for the beautiful. "Peace" is the removal of conflict and the harmony of two bodies and minds. "Patience" is the willingness to wait for the yearning to become mutual. "Kindness" is the tender approach that never

forces attention upon another. "Goodness" is the positive quality of character which makes for mutual respect. "Faithfulness" is created when minds are at rest about each other. "Gentleness" exists when caresses are exchanged without roughness. "Self-control" is the voluntary discipline of desire that is able to find complete expression through careful choosing of the times and seasons.

I know how much these next words include beyond the physical expression of affection but I want you to go over them in your mind now with a direct application to this part of their immortal message. "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful" (I Corinthians 13:4-5).

During pregnancy a sweet intimacy comes to both husband and wife in planning for their child. The mysteries which we do not understand, and the meanings which we do grasp, both may become very real if each will open his eyes to see what is happening.

There is nothing common or coarse or unclean about sex itself. God has made us physically for each other. In such a spirit St. Clement of Alexandria wrote, "How can I be ashamed of those parts of me that God has not been ashamed to create?"

Christ taught, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:9). In these words the Lord Jesus was describing the only plan that fulfills the purpose of God and fulfills our own deepest needs.

On the second Sunday in January I invite all the couples I have married to return to the church and take again the solemn vows with which their home began. For this occasion in 1931, I wrote a paraphrase of the Thirteenth chapter of



I Corinthians which still expresses the spirit we are seeking to establish and develop in our homes.

My Home may be made beautiful by the wealth of the world, but if it has not love, it is only an empty shell.

My Home may be the rendezvous of the witty and the meeting place of the wise, but if it has not love, it is only a noisy house.

My Home may distribute its welcome to men of every estate, my home may toil for the betterment of all mankind, but if it has not love, its influence will soon vanish.

"The spirit of a true home is very patient, very kind, it knows no jealousy, makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful. It is never gladdened when sorrow comes to another home. The spirit of a true home is made happy by goodness, always slow to talk with others about the intimacies of the home, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always enduring. The home will never disappear. As for civilizations, they will be superseded; as for knowledge, it will grow out of date; as for institutions, they will cease. For we only know a little now and we can only see dimly into the future but when the spirit of a true home rules the affairs of this earth, then will be established the perfect kingdom of God. Thus faith and hope and love last on forever in our homes—but of these three, the greatest of all is love."

#### *A PRAYER FOR ALL TRUE LOVERS*

"We invoke Thy gentlest blessings, our Father, on all true lovers. We praise Thee for the great longing that draws the soul of man and maid together and bids them leave all the dear bonds of the past to cleave to one another. We thank Thee for the revealing power of love which divines in the one beloved the mystic power and glory of humanity. We

thank Thee for the transfiguring power of love which ripens and enables our nature, calling forth the hidden stores of tenderness and strength and overcoming the selfishness of youth by the passion of self-surrender.

"We pray Thee to make their love strong, holy and deathless, that no misunderstandings may fray the bond, and no gray disenchantment of the years may have power to quench the heavenly light that now glows in them. May they early gain wisdom to discern the true values of life, and may no tyranny of fashion and no glamour of cheaper joys filch from them the wholesome peace and inward satisfaction which only loyal love can give.

"Grant them with sober eyes to look beyond these sweet days of friendship to the generations yet to come, and to realize that the home for which they long will be part of the sacred tissue of the body of humanity in which Thou art to dwell, that so they may reverence themselves and drink the cup of joy with awe."<sup>19</sup>



## Questions to Ask and to Answer

*For each to think through "on his own."*

How wisely do I love myself?

IN what ways do I usually express my affection?

AM I overprotective of myself? Of my mate?

Do I really love other people sincerely or for  
what I can get out of them?

IN what ways do I recognize that my love is  
mixed with other emotions?

*For each to tell the other and to discuss with  
the other.*

WHAT was it that first drew you to me?

How can I improve this to please you more?

WHAT do I dislike about myself and how can you  
help me overcome this?

IN what ways do you show me that you love me?

WHAT people have I known who really were af-  
fectionate to each other and what can we learn  
from them?

*For both to discuss together.*

How did our affection for each other start?

WHAT are the main events which have shaped  
our love?

Is our love growing?

WHAT can be done to increase the expression of  
our affection and to make it more meaningful  
to both of us?

WHAT are the prospects for future development  
of our affection for each other?

## 5

### *The Art of Association*

TO MANY couples I say:

"Listen together to some of the good radio programs. If you have a television set, you can add another shared experience to your home. A movie, if carefully selected and discussed later with discernment, can be stimulating. One of the best methods is to buy a small record player. Several inexpensive models with excellent tonal reproduction are on the market. Buy a good record as often as you can afford it. Read the title clearly, getting the composer's name fixed firmly in your mind as well as the artist actually playing the music, and listen to it together, deliberately determined to remember it."



Eunice came to me complaining that her husband "got on her nerves." Questions led her to explain that he had annoying mannerisms, such as wiping the knife and fork at every meal with his napkin as if he expected it to be dirty. There were other petty faults and one big grievance—he never told her anything about his business or any of the events that had occurred during his day at work. When Arthur came to my study, he complained chiefly about her hot temper and nagging. He also was hurt because she had friends and interests that she never discussed with him.

In a few days I had them both together in my study and they planned a method of cooperative living, sharing each evening the experience of the day. But before they could do this "on their own" they both spent several hours together with me trying to make me understand what was important to them. As each saw how hard the other was working in order to try to communicate, each of them developed more skills in this and became more tolerant of the other.

*A HAPPY HOME IS MADE UP OF TWO OR MORE  
CLOSELY ASSOCIATED PEOPLE*

A vital element of the art of staying happily married is to have many areas of mutual interests. Making your home the best it can become depends upon how you share the best and finest in life. The strength of your home depends upon the number of the ties that bind you together. The quality of your home depends on the quality of your shared interests.

In marriage the associations of husband and wife become united, no longer referring always to "my family" and "your family" but speaking now of "our families" and no more using exclusively the phrases, "my friends" and "your friends," but often speaking of "our friends."

We need to put both enthusiasm and intelligence into

creating shared habits of association in our homes. This requires losing some of our old independence, but both gain a new joy which more than makes up for the loss.

- 1) Eating habits are a source of solidarity. *When* we eat as well as *what* we eat is the subject for compromise, but agreement to eat at the same time is a source of strength.
- 2) Time to get up and time to go to bed both need to be adjusted. The husband *must* be at work on time. The wife ought to see him off cheerfully and not stay asleep while he gets his lonely breakfast.
- 3) Minor habits must be organized. He may be used to scattering ashes on the floor and she may not want to put the cap back on the toothpaste tube. Signals to be used on the bathroom door for rush hours are usually worked out soon after marriage.

Doing things together is important in a home. Sometimes this means doing what the other likes to do, finding a new interest for oneself. In all the years of married life there is inspiration from sharing friends and the joy of working together at the duties of the home itself.

Reading aloud alternately will help develop interesting mutual interests. A perfect book is *Sonnets from the Portuguese* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, a magnificent expression of exalted human love. Many of the poems of Shakespeare will enrich any couple's vocabulary. Here is a poem by Robert Burns of Scotland which expresses our human joy in being together.

Not the bee upon the blossom,  
In the pride o' sinny noon;  
Not the little sporting fairy,  
All beneath the simmer moon;



Not the minstrel, in the moment,  
Fancy lightens in his e'e,  
Kens the pleasure, feels the rapture,  
That thy presence gies to me.

Cultivate distinctive family customs which enrich the traditions of your home. Walter Damrosch once said, "Divorces would be half as many if families would sing together."

Frances L. Warner has written of this in "Inner Springs": "One great thing about marriage is the fun of living together two at a time. You get not only your own life's journey but an extra ticket through another life as well. Also, you get two points of view for your money."

Years ago Atlanta was shocked by the revelation of an affair by one of our leading citizens with a young woman who seemed the opposite of all he would normally be supposed to desire in a woman. "What can she mean to him?" I heard his friends say in bewilderment. I knew the situation well enough to know that his wife had been to him everything but what he wanted her most to be—a real woman. This was not primarily a sexual matter but a matter of companionship and mutual interests. This husband and wife never learned the joy of association. Just the human delight of being with another friendly human being is an important part of a good marriage.

#### *EACH FAMILY IS PART OF A COMMUNITY*

A family has roots in the soil of the community. From the community each family draws much that makes possible the home. As each family is strong and beautiful, the community itself becomes more worthwhile.

A never-ending problem in every community is how to get along with our neighbors. I have seen scores of homes broken

by interference from well-meaning but stupid friends who lived in the same block. Bill and Alice were the victims of an "inferiority complex" of the well-meaning friends who lived next door. Their marriage was saved five years ago only by the drastic step of moving to another neighborhood.

I have watched community attitudes make the reconciliation of a husband and wife more difficult. Here is an incident from the interviews of a psychologist, "I wondered what they (his friends) would think if I went back to this woman who had caused me so much trouble. They sympathized, of course, and that made it all the harder. Then, later, people insinuated to me that I was such a fine fellow that it must have been my wife's fault. In telling the story of our break I had always been careful not to say anything against my wife for two reasons: one, that she is really a very nice person and, the other, that she might come to this new place and I didn't want people prejudiced against her when she did. But the very fact that I tried to be fair with her and take the blame myself made my friends all the more certain that whatever had happened had been her fault rather than mine."

The community influences family life by social customs and laws, fire protection, police service, water, gas, electricity, waste collectors. Each family is dependent on the community as a whole. Certain agencies are at work to improve families in the community—churches, parent-teacher associations, women's clubs, domestic relations courts, family welfare agencies, etc.

Families are affected by the dominant forces operating in their community such as labor controversies, political corruption, major industries, racial antagonisms, denominational prejudices. Ask yourself this question, "What sort of



influence does my home exert in the community?" Many a crabbed disposition displayed by a man at the office reflects only the atmosphere of the breakfast table at home. Many an irritable business woman reflects a husband who has not learned to curb his temper.

Other people influence our homes for good or bad. A striking illustration of the power of association may be seen in Alcoholics Anonymous. The launching of "Divorcees Anonymous" in Chicago was announced in February 1950 and makes available a new resource in staying happily married for many communities. In its first six weeks the group tackled thirty-nine couples who had applied for divorces and sent thirty-three of them home again with fresh understanding of how to stay married. Patterned after "Alcoholics Anonymous" this organization is now available in many cities and charges no fees.

Samuel Starr, the Chicago lawyer who created "Divorcees Anonymous," estimates that at least seventy per cent of divorces can be prevented where either the husband or wife is willing to work hard for a reconciliation and practically one hundred per cent of divorces can be eliminated if both are willing to cooperate. His watchword: "Divorce is like cancer. Catch it early and cure it; neglect it, and the end is inevitable."

I have seen families move to Atlanta and never become part of our community. They erect a barrier between themselves and all others. They are self-sufficient units with little regard for their neighbors.

Even if the stay is only to be for a few years, this attitude is still unfortunate. All human life is brief. Each month is too precious to be wasted. We must plunge as quickly as possible

into the community around us instead of waiting for the other people to make the first move. Lonely persons with few friends are themselves largely to blame. If we are friendly, we can make friends nearly anywhere.

Community service can be a valuable source of strength in the home. I remember a young woman who was having periods of severe weeping and uncontrolled nervousness. She was constantly taking her own pulse. "How do *I* feel? What am *I* worried about? Why do *I* have so much trouble?" she was asking herself. She was drowning in a wave of self-pity. She needed more work to do. Her husband was unhappy over her constant whining about nothing. He gladly consented to her working half a day five days a week as a volunteer at the Red Cross. Her subsequent improvement was amazing.

Our own home may be seriously disturbed unless good relations are maintained with the organized life of the community. But no community group is worthy of support if it is the enemy of the home. Fraternal orders, bridge clubs, even churches with too many meetings taking either parent away more than three nights a week are a menace. Some parents run day and night after some organization while their home goes to pieces.

### *MIXED MARRIAGES ENCOURAGE UNHAPPINESS*

Three main studies in the United States have been made of interfaith marriages. All confirm what has been my own observation. The failure of homes where husband and wife belong to different religions is more than twice the proportion for homes where both belong to the same church.

Many people of different faiths do manage to stay together.



Some of them have a very difficult time. Others seem to get along rather well.

"The combinations which may cause most trouble are Catholic and non-Catholic, Jewish and non-Jewish, church-important and church-not-important, liberal and ultraconservative (even when both parties are members of the same denomination). Within the Protestant groups, the teachings and practices of certain smaller religious groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mennonites, Seventh Day Adventists and others are so much at variance with those of most Protestants that interfaith marriage may result in really serious difficulties."<sup>20</sup>

Prior to their marriage, two persons of different faiths should settle these questions:

- 1) In what church will their children be trained? This is a matter for discussion between the man and woman. The fact that a church may have a fixed policy does not mean that the final word has been spoken. In free America, this should be *your decision*.
- 2) If any changes are to be made in church membership, these should be made before marriage so that the wedding may take place in the church to which both of you will belong. This will have a major influence on the future of your home. The minister who solemnizes your wedding has a unique relationship to your home. No other pastor is ever to do for you what he is to do. Find out all you can about what the churches that interest both of you really stand for. Small books are available and will be supplied gladly by the pastors.
- 3) If you cannot agree on joining one organization, what are you going to do about attending church and supporting the work of your separate churches with your money and service?

### WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN INTERFAITH MARRIAGES?

The most important is tension about the rearing of the children. How can parents maintain family harmony when they are members of different religious faiths and refuse to unite? In most cases they have only an armistice. Rare indeed are the husband and wife who are kept apart by carefully considered reasons. In almost every divided home, the division is maintained simply by the weight of the inherited opinions or customs of their parents with a liberal mixture of human stubbornness on both sides. Religion does not keep them apart. Irreligious attitudes such as bigotry, pride and wilful stupidity are the real cause of divided homes.

In many homes where each parent is a member of a different denomination, very little vital religious experience is known by the family as a whole. The unity of the family within one church is more important than denominational loyalty. Religion should be a power to hold people together and to make more happiness in the home. One of the most important decisions that any family ever makes is what they determine to do about a church to which all can belong. To refuse to decide is always to reject.

### SIX RITUALS FOR THE HOME

Here are six religious practices that add meaning to the art of staying happily married:

*First, say the prayer of thanksgiving at all meals.* This provides a creative and revealing experience for all, which every individual in the home shares. Some families sing the Doxology, or join hands before the prayer. God is the ultimate Provider of this food and to thank Him makes the meal taste better and the family fun at table more wholesome.



I request every couple whom I marry, "At the first meal you eat together in your home let the husband give the prayer of thanks and at the second meal let the wife offer to God the expression of their mutual gratitude. Then take turn and turn about in all the years ahead. Every time you break bread together, join your hearts in prayer."

Here is a meaningful prayer I heard a young couple use before their meal.

Thou Unseen Guest, O Master dear,  
Help us to feel Thy presence here.  
Be with us now and bless our food,  
And fill our hearts with gratitude.

*Second, when putting the children to bed, read stories from the Bible or from secular literature.* I recommend to parents that both father and mother take turns in doing this.

*Third, your child should have his own Bible in modern English* and with readable type, given him about the time he completes the third grade. The Revised Standard Version is what I recommend.

*Fourth, set a regular time daily or weekly for family devotions*—for scripture reading, meditation, prayer, and remembrance of special occasions and major holidays. For a wedding anniversary, there should be a prayer of thanksgiving for God's help in the past and a petition for His guidance in the future, which will help the children to recognize the sanctity of marriage. On birthdays, also, thank God for the life of the one receiving congratulations.

Those who write or speak about family life express often their concern about the diminishing number of family altars, which is indeed to be regretted, but is a symptom of a disease rather than the disease itself. The modern home often does

not have the right atmosphere for prayer. The rush and the confusion of our homes need to be corrected.

Most couples eat in the kitchen or the breakfast room. It is my custom to ask couples to place a Bible on the table where they usually eat their meals. I often say, "In the morning, before you eat your breakfast, pause for a few minutes to read out of God's word in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the first four books of the New Testament. This will put the Word of God at the heart of your home." After a few years they will receive much help from other sections of the Bible such as the Psalms and the letters of Paul. But for the first few years it will do them more good to stay with the direct teachings of Christ than to try to wander around the rest of the Bible.

A man who has achieved outstanding success in American life wrote with tender memory of the custom of the home where he was reared, "It was my office as a little lad to fetch the Bible for father's use, and I will always cherish that simple responsibility."

For those who want suggestions here are some. "The Union Prayer Book" has a section for family prayers in Jewish homes. Roman Catholics will find in the entrance halls of their churches pamphlets such as "John and Mary Pray Together." Members of the Protestant Episcopal Church use "The Book of Common Prayer." The excellent quarterly, "The Upper Room" is published by the Methodists but used by many denominations. The Presbyterians call theirs "Day by Day." The American Baptists and the Christian Churches jointly publish "The Secret Place." "How to Conduct Family Worship at the Table" is available for ten cents at all Protestant book stores or "How to Have Family Prayers" may be purchased for five cents. Good collections of prayers are



available, such as S. R. Oglesby's, "Prayers for All Occasions" or "God's Minute." For homes with small children such books are helpful as "A Child's Praise" by Bannister or "This Is God's World" by Neidermeyer.

You can do this if you really want to! No other single factor is so important. Bitterness can not live in the atmosphere of prayer. Problems are never too great when God is asked to help solve them.

*Fifth, celebrate and teach the meanings of the main holy days of each season.* Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving Day and many others emphasize certain phases of religion. These can be celebrated by decorations in the home as well as by the devotions, special menus, songs the whole family sings, and the general conversation.

*Sixth, have a "Family at Home Night."* Choose one night of the week when every one of the children and both parents can spend the evening enjoying one another. Select something to do together that night in which all can enjoy participating.

A minimum of three nights of every week should be spent quietly at home without guests and with some time each night when the radio and television sets are silent.

#### *SOMETIMES EVEN THE CHURCH MAY INTERFERE*

I helped Alice and Henry to begin their home many years ago. At the time of their marriage I discussed the opportunity to make their home more meaningful if both joined the same church. They both preferred the Methodist denomination so I taught them what the Methodist Church stood for and phoned the minister they named to tell him they were ready to confer with him about becoming members of the congregation he served. They joined that church but about two

years later were back in my study to discuss the threatened breakdown of their home.

"We never have any time for one another in our home," were his words in beginning their story. "Sunday night we go to preaching. Wednesday night is prayer meeting. Two nights each week we supervise the church gymnasium and there are always committee meetings we are supposed to attend."

The institution of religion may help or hurt a marriage.

I have seen couples whose unreal religion acted as a drug to deaden their sensitivity to one another. The crucial problem here arises from the fact that adults continue their childhood approach more persistently in religion than in any other field of human behavior that I know.

"She is determined to convert me and I don't want to join her church," was the way one young man recently began his complaints about his wife. A few years earlier they had been married by a pastor of a neighboring church to which they both belonged. They had been only nominal members and a year ago she was persuaded to join one of the more rigid religious organizations. She was blind to the arrogant assumptions in her actions and her convictions were so strong that after one joint interview I suggested that he return by himself. My approach to him was to help him understand the need for patient tolerance of her aggressive behavior. They are still married but her attacks on him have become less strident as he goodnaturedly but firmly maintains his own freedom of choice.

### *RELIGIOUS HOMES ARE HAPPY HOMES*

A religious home offers adequate returns for the efforts necessary to its achievement—greater joy to the husband and wife, a better environment than any other for children,



the finest known opportunity for development of personality, the only real assurance against loneliness, the best possible tender care in illness or old age. At its best, religion lights an altar fire in a home in whose radiance all the family see each other as children of a loving Father.

A religious organization is no better than the homes of its members. As in the Jewish religion from which it sprang, Christianity was in the beginning a home religion. The ancient Jewish faith did not center in the temple or synagogue. It was the father in the home who was responsible for the religious education of the children.

A main function of the church is to help create better homes. A result of this will be that better homes will make better churches. But let every church beware lest it defeat its own purpose. Let each church above all become the servant of these homes, teaching parents how to build religious habits, guiding the spiritual growth of every member of the family and of the family unit as a whole. People who have worshipped at home all during the week will be prepared to worship on Sunday.

All through the Bible God is pictured as yearning for association with His human children. Our own desire for association with each other is part of God's plan for human experience. We can not really *live* by ourselves alone.

The young couple who plan to be active in their church have a better chance of succeeding in their family than a couple who isolate themselves from their surroundings.

The young Jewish couple at the beginning of the honeymoon are given clear instructions that they are to establish a home where the ideals and customs of Abraham will continue. The honeymoon is the place to start their observance of the religious customs to be continued through the years.

I ask husband and wife to kneel together beside their bed the first night they spend together, telling them in the last conference before their marriage, "You can pray the Lord's Prayer aloud together. You can ask God to help you to be better persons. John, you make the first prayer. If it is only a sentence or two, that is all right, and then Mary, you pray whatever is in your heart. God made you both and you need to thank Him for each other before you possess one another." Sometimes one or both of them may be shy about this. I encourage them to start with the promise that as they continue, skill will grow.

"Take a Bible with you on your honeymoon," I tell the couples I marry. "Begin by reading from the four gospels, the first books in the New Testament. You may prefer to start with the Gospel of Luke and read aloud as much as you can every day. Even a few minutes spent in listening to Christ's message can help to put the Word of God at the heart of your home. John, you read the first day, and Mary, take your turn the second day. Then keep it up all the rest of your life."

A mother of a girl I married months ago met me on the street with this remark, "I wish some one had persuaded my husband and me when we were married thirty years ago to pray together every night beside our bed. It would have made a difference in the atmosphere of our home."

There is a rich meaning in the act of joining a church together. With the variety of religious organizations available in large cities, most couples with a moderate amount of searching can find some church to which both can give their wholehearted allegiance. It may be that they will have to agree to disagree about organized religion, but if they can join a church together and be good members of that church, how much they have added to their family life! To sit to-



gether in the pew, to sing the hymns together, to take the sacrament together, to pray together, to receive together the insights of the sermon and to accept the spiritual strength of the benediction together—these are all privileges every church offers to its members.

What is the attitude of your family toward the church? Do you attend together? Do you support the church by service and money? What is your attitude toward its program and leadership?

Barbara and Bob came to talk with me before separating—a promise I exact from all the couples I marry. “I suppose we are just incompatible,” Barbara said. Questions brought out that they “got on each other’s nerves.” His mannerisms annoyed her. He resented her “nagging.”

In this interview I encouraged her to tell all about his faults, for I sensed that her resentment needed to be released. Barbara berated Bob for ten minutes. The hot, hard words came out like a torrent that had long been dammed. While she talked he watched her closely, without any interruption.

When she had had her say in full, he was encouraged to speak his mind. But watching her seemed to have given him some insight into their problem. The strained, tense expression left her face as she got it off her chest. His simple comment was, “There isn’t anything really the matter with her. Sometimes she gets on my nerves and I guess that’s as much my fault as hers.”

Further conversation revealed that they had not attended church together since they were married. He never told her about his business. She had her own interests and never discussed them with him. They had shared no spiritual experiences to unite them in their innermost selves.

Before they left my study they planned to attend public

worship together at least once each Sunday, buy a small record player and listen to music together, take walks and watch the sunset, play and pray together, and share their experiences. It was a good program and since they have designed it themselves, the outcome has real assurance of success.

Above the grave of many broken homes might be written: "Died of Spiritual Neglect." Most of the unhappy couples who come to me do not need to be so maladjusted. They have simply allowed themselves to give their attention to less important matters. They have neglected themselves.

Of course all of us are busy. All of us have distractions in our demanding days. All of us have times when we don't feel like expressing ourselves in prayer. Each of these objections can be intelligently and courageously overcome if we mean business about raising the quality of our home life.

It is astonishing that Christian parents will foster their children's studies in the public school and make no effort at encouraging their children to study their church school lessons. The church or synagogue is the most important institution in any community.

More people belong to religious groups than to any other type of organization. Here is an open door into any community. Organized religion has a large stake in helping newcomers feel themselves part of the community. A friendly personal greeting will soon lead to participation in the group life. No amount of "joining" lay organizations can satisfy the personal needs of the members as this does.

Invite other families to come to church with you and help them to adjust in the new experience. Just bringing them along is not enough. We must see that they have a satisfactory time in the House of God. This means preparing them by



explaining the service before it begins, by participating ourselves and by gladly answering their questions afterwards.

Let us ask ourselves these questions:

"How much does my home contribute to the kingdom of God? How much does its activity indicate of love for Christ and God? How long since a stranger has been welcomed to my table?" No handout at the back door will determine the extent of our genuine love. Are the lonely, the unfortunate, the distressed, welcome to our home?

In nearly every church, strangers come each week. Is the warmth of fellowship here continued through our homes?

### *THE ETERNAL TRIANGLE*

Marriage is built upon an "Eternal Triangle." At the bottom of the triangle are a man and a woman. At the top is God. When they are united at the top they cannot separate at the bottom. My own long experience has shown that when both husband and wife together live with an awareness of God and a devotion to Christ the home is blessed indeed.

That "people who pray together, stay together" has been proven to me over the years. In observing thousands of broken homes, I have never seen a divorce where the shared interests of the couple included the regular experience of humbly kneeling together to ask God's help.

Now and then I see a printed card hanging on the wall in homes I visit,

Christ is the Head of this house,  
The silent listener to every conversation,  
The unseen guest at every meal.

May these words be a description of an experience and not just a motto on the wall!

Our race has always understood that these words from the Bible applied to more than the physical walls and roof of a house. They express the religious basis of an enduring home. "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

The religious home is a *result* of centuries of human development. In the beginning God created our first ancestors male and female and they began from that early home the development that grew step by step into the permanent and beautiful home-life of the ancient Jews. The family experience and teachings of Christ were the basis of the strategy of the early church which began in homes, won its way by converting homes and established its most beneficial contribution by the improvement of homes.

The religious home is a *refuge*, a rampart of defense to civilization. In the home at Bethany, Christ went to rest and refresh Himself in its air of relaxation. How can words describe such a home! Here we are restored to the strength by which we return to our daily work.

The religious home is a *revelation* of character. Here we test ourselves for what we really are! Here we are known and know!

The religious home is a school in *religion*. Where did you learn the most important truths by which you live? Parents and children are in a continuous process of growing together, renewing the youthful eagerness for life of the parents and advancing the maturity of the children.

The religious home is a *radiance*, the light of the world. The glory of every civilization lies in its homes. Our family life is the best place to begin building a decent world.

The religious home is the pattern of *reconciliation*. How



are we ever going to get people to live together decently? Capital versus labor, colored versus white, class versus class—the cleavages run deep and wide in our social order. What will hold all this together? The spirit of a true home!

The religious home is a *realization* of heaven on earth. Here we have a sample in advance of the rapture of the redeemed. God is our Father. We are all His children. Some day we are going home. The spirit of informal gladness we recognize in our homes is a foretaste of glory divine.

Family life grows richer through shared experiences. In the solemnization of marriage in our congregation, we have the couple repeat together the vows of Ruth to Naomi, the oldest recorded covenant of love in all the world:

Entreat me not to leave you or to return from  
following you  
For where you go I will go and where you  
lodge I will lodge,  
Your people shall be my people  
And your God shall be my God,  
May the Lord do so to me and more also,  
If even death parts you from me.

(Ruth 1:15-17)

Successful homes are a result of common association. Some persons are happiest sharing everything—all thoughts, all possessions, all activities. Others in contrast, are emotionally satisfied to go their own way most of the time, desiring companionship only at intervals. Of course, the extent of their association must be decided by each couple.

“Freely ye have received, freely give” (K-J: Matthew 10.8) is a basic way of family living as taught by Christ. How much has been done for us! We have received from parents, friends,

teachers the fundamentals that make us human. Where we have received there is the normal desire to give.

We find our greatest joys in giving and sharing as He did. Every day in our home there is an opportunity to find that joy. The general method of Christ seems to have been to rebuild society by restoring the family. The emphasis of Paul on the sanctity of homes was a stabilizing influence for a crumbling empire and enabled Christianity to survive when the state went to pieces.

Genuine love is above all based on religious faith which helps us to see ourselves as part of a larger whole. We lose ourselves in the welfare of our home and we find our best self in service of one another.

Through the centuries millions of human beings have placed their faith in God. He has brought courage to the faltering, strength to the weak, hope to the despairing. God is all around us, in the starry heavens and also in our own homes.

The less faith a couple has in God, the less faith they will have in each other and the more insecure and fearful they may be within their home. The more demanding conditions of our atomic age require a return to religion. Moral integrity is guaranteed only by a faith in God which is relevant to our daily lives.

I have seen the blind futility, the ultimate worthlessness of family life without faith in God. A few homes of cultured pagans have at first sight impressed me as places of great spiritual strength but I have watched even these long enough to know that Jesus was right when He taught that storms beat upon good and bad alike. The real difference between homes becomes apparent only when the rains descend and the winds blow and beat upon that house. If the foundation is God, the



home will stand. Any other foundation reaps the final verdict, "Great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:27). For all the problems of family living, I have never yet seen a solution that was not basically religious.

To make a happy home, God must be in the family.

# Questions to Ask and to Answer

*For each to think through "on his own."*

How can I be a better person?

WHAT can I do to make our home more interesting to the other persons who also live there?

IN what ways can I reorganize my life so as to have more time for my family?

WHY am I a member of the church to which I belong?

WHAT differences does this make in my attitudes and actions?

*For each to tell the other and to discuss with the other.*

WHAT are my favorite sports?

WHAT do I like to do most of all, and could we do this together?

WHAT problems do I have in business or in home management which I want to tell my mate?

WHAT did my religious training mean to me?

How has God been real to me?

*For both to consider together.*

WHAT are the areas of our mutual interests?

WHAT unmet needs do each of us have?

WHAT other activities could we share which would help our home?

How much time do we spend together each week?

How can we improve the quality of our home life?



## 6

### *The Art of Achievement*

 I HAVE SEEN a good deal of married life at first hand, observing the courage and good humor of my fellow men struggling under great difficulties. I have helped prepare young lovers for marriage, I have listened patiently to the problems of the mature, I have sat through the long hours of the night with the dying and shared in the sorrow of the family. Out of it all comes this clear conviction: The art of staying happily married depends in large measure on learning together to do well an increasing number of activities.

Recently I read an interesting story of the his-

toric "Little Brown Church" near Nashua, Iowa, where many weddings are solemnized each year. The pastor has a lovely way of starting these couples on their great opportunity of achieving a happy home.

After the ceremony, he walks with the couple to the entrance of the church and says, "Before you go, the bride has the honor of ringing the church bell." He hands her the rope and she pulls with all her might but the heavy old bell will not turn.

The minister then says to the groom, "Lend a hand and help." Together they pull and the bell turns over, sending out over the countryside the news of another happy wedding. Then the pastor says, "Never forget that as long as you pull together you can ring the bell."

Making a home is lots of work, but is that bad? No, that's good for us. The work, if we accept its necessity instead of resenting it, will help to relieve our inner tensions. The good feeling which results from achievements created by joint effort is an essential to the finest happiness in marriage.

Arnold Toynbee has described the history of nations in terms of "challenge and response." After a period of defeat and prostration a nation may rise to greater heights. This same life-force seems to describe families as well as nations. I have watched many couples go through periods of crisis which challenged them to make the effort to achieve a happier home.

### *WHO CAUSES THE UNHAPPINESS IN YOUR HOME?*

Who is the enemy of your home? Who has the power to destroy your family? There are just two persons in all the world who can do this—you and the one to whom you are married!

You may be fighting a bitter battle against in-laws. Another



man may be trying to take your wife away. Some scheming woman may be laying a trap for your husband. The neighbors may be lying about you and spreading false rumors to wreck your reputation. All this may be true. Of course, it probably isn't true, and you might want to verify the facts with some competent fair observer. But even if the worst is really true and outside enemies are battering at your home, they cannot destroy your family. Only the husband and wife involved can do this.

All over the world people have to deal with envious and jealous persons who want to destroy the joys of success in others. Since you're human, right now you probably could name some persons who have tried to harm you, whose yearning for excitement picked on you as a target. Are you going to fight back, trying to injure them? If you do, your whole life may be entangled in the resultant unhappiness. You and your mate are the keepers of your home. Even though the devil himself seeks to destroy your family, he will be powerless if you will guard your hearts against bitterness to others. Lift your heads! Lock your lips! Smile! Join hands, you two, and leave them alone!

I have seen many couples whose mutual irritability was caused by unwise efforts to limit each other's freedom. I know a home where the wife is musical and the husband is not. In their tug-of-war she demands that he escort her to concerts and he resents the time she spends practicing her own music at the piano.

In another home I know, the man enjoys outdoor life and wants to go fishing whenever he can, while his wife despises the odor of fish and refuses to clean them when he brings them home.

Another couple fuss frequently over the public activities which she enjoys while he wants her to stay at home.

I know a man who is fond of poetry and early in his married life made an attempt to read it aloud to his wife. She made fun of his efforts and it has been a closed subject ever since.

All these differences could have been handled in such a way that each would have given encouragement to the other. They could have achieved something constructive together, but they chose, even though not entirely conscious of what they were doing, to be rivals rather than helpers.

Harriet was reared in a home where her father often spoke in endearing words and used caresses as part of his normal behavior. She assumed that her husband would do the same. Joe had been reared in a family where there was no visible expression between his father and mother of how they felt. He made very little effort to show his feelings. In less than a year after I married them she went home to her parents. Her father was still the gallant and attentive lover to her mother—but for the first time she wondered, as she saw him let her mother shovel coal into the country stove and clean out the ashes!

Before Harriet and Joe went back to living together they came to me to try to get their new start together on the right basis. She has learned that one of his ways of showing her his love is to help around the house. And Joe has taken literally my advice, "Say, 'I love you' at least once each day."

Here are a few of the most frequent causes of family discord:

- 1) Little consideration for the partner's feeling.
- 2) Exaggeration of his own abilities by either or both of them.
- 3) Unreliability—just plain can't depend on each other.



As a starter, go back over these and be honest with yourself. The place to begin building a better home-life is right *within yourself*.

### *A HAPPY HOME IS ITSELF AN ACHIEVEMENT*

Married persons are less subject to mental disorders than the unmarried. Dr. Neil A. Dayton of Connecticut studied 89,190 cases of mental breakdown and found marriage was a major influence in maintaining a wholesome relationship to reality. Dr. Dayton's conclusion was that "married people represent the lowest admission rates for mental diseases. The overwhelming majority of marriages are happy and the good adaptation to another person helps to keep people from 'going off the beam'."<sup>21</sup>

I believe that happy marriages are made in heaven. Such marriages do not happen automatically when a couple says "I do." Heaven is within us, and it is within ourselves that such marriages are "made" in day-by-day decisions.

Those near to us require freedom if they are to develop their capacities to the utmost. Freedom begins at home—the same place that charity begins.

One of the important practices in the art of staying happily married is built on the idea of "achievement." Each agrees not to do certain things because these disturb the other person. These range from a common agreement not to pick teeth at the table, or to wipe our feet on the door mat, rather than on the living room rug, to much more serious changes in behavior or attitude. When the gears in an automobile do not work properly, we may file off a rough place here and do without a tooth there until there is no violent clash, but there are empty spaces where the gears do not grip, and a great deal of

power is wasted as the car moves in spurts. So the family needs to mesh together to get full living-power.

Perhaps our worst mistake is asking of people more than they can give.

Adjustments between husband and wife are aided by being busy at practical tasks—the business of making a home, meeting civic responsibilities, achieving something important together.

A psychiatrist friend of mine told me that in the course of his practice many times a mother would bring a child needing help. After some examination of the child, he would ask to see the parents. "Are we to bring little Henry, too?" "No," he would answer, "I want to see you and your husband alone." When the parents recognize their responsibility to achieve a good home, often the behavior problems of the children subside.

The father who comes home exhausted by the day's work wants to sit quietly in an easy chair. The mother who has been on duty with the children all day long may want just as much to get out or to talk. Here is an opportunity for taking turns in doing together what each wants to do alone at the time. Where do people get the motive power for such conciliation? Many couples receive their inspiration from keeping their eyes on the goal both want to reach—a truly happy and united home.

The art of staying happily married requires that we live a balanced life. For some couples it will mean more togetherness outside the home. For others it will mean inviting interesting and stimulating guests to share a meal or an evening. For some the purchase of simple home games will help. For another couple a few minutes reading aloud together, one reading while the other listens, will balance what was



otherwise a one-sided life. Many will want to develop further the religious side of their family life, belonging to the same congregation, praying together, sharing in the highest and holiest endeavors of the human spirit.

*EMOTIONAL MATURITY INCREASES OUR  
ACHIEVEMENT*

Some of you may want to know exactly what is meant when we talk about emotional maturity. We have a loose way of speaking when we say, "She acts like a baby." Here is an excellent definition: "An emotionally mature person is one with no parental fixations, free from domination, free from imagined illnesses or phobias or infantilisms, able to think independently, able to meet crises without turning to parents for help: one who takes care of himself, who treats the opposite sex with understanding and affection and is able to expend his energies in constructive activities."<sup>22</sup>

In adapting to each other in marriage, people are inevitably subject to some tension. The biological differences between men and women, the history of their varied rearing, the normal distinctions between any two individuals all are accentuated by the demands marriage makes on both.

Exhaustion from overwork of either husband or wife may be a factor in disrupting a home. He may be in a position where he thinks he is forced to try to do too much at the office or factory. She may be employed outside the house and still be attempting to do the housework while caring for the children and having no help. Too tired to be any inspiration to one another, they fight over trivial details.

In marriage, a husband and wife are at first absorbed in one another. Soon they must become absorbed in the actual jobs of rearing children and earning a living.

Win the victory that is within the reach of everyone—be honest with yourself! There is a strength that comes from achievement.

You are on the way to overcoming your own inferiority when you have been frank about what is wrong with yourself. Self-deceit destroys self-respect.

A man who is willing to face himself can be frank with others. We get much better results when we devote our energy to improving ourselves instead of spending our energy trying in vain to hide our defects.



## Questions to Ask and to Answer

*For each to think through "on his own."*

WHAT grades did I make in school?

How well did I get along with others when I was younger?

WITH whom have I recently had a major disagreement and why?

How have I improved my ability actually to accomplish what I want to do?

WHAT additional achievements do I look forward to?

*For each to tell about and to discuss with the other.*

WHAT are the main tasks at which I am now working?

How can my mate help me in these?

WHAT do I want to achieve more than anything else?

IN what ways do I think I have failed?

WHAT is needed to help me accomplish more?

*For both to consider together.*

WHAT victories have we won together?

How have these achievements influenced our home?

WHAT defeats have we experienced?

WHAT were the consequences?

How can we work together better?

# 7

## *The Art of Adventure*

 **M**OST COURTSHIP begins as mutual attraction with a strong element of adventure and novelty. After the lovers become husband and wife the same desire to be attractive to each other must persist. The awareness that life together is an adventure into ever-enlarging fields of new interests can help keep the sparkle in a home.

The same things that worked in courtship are effective in marriage: a neat, clean physical appearance, being at our best even when we feel otherwise, greeting our beloved with a smile and a kiss, showing anticipation of each other's company, having something to discuss of interest to each other.



*THE PHYSICAL SIDE OF THE ART OF ADVENTURE*

A story from the records of "Divorcees Anonymous" will help to illustrate this. When Mary B. came into the divorce lawyer's office she was twenty-nine and looked closer to forty. Her clothes were unkempt, her hair stringy.

"I want a divorce," she sobbed. "My husband left me. He's running around with a girl from his office and doesn't even try to hide it."

The lawyer listened to the familiar story of cooling ardor on the part of the husband after the baby came, of quarrels finally climaxed by separation. When Mary had finished, the lawyer asked, "You still love your husband, don't you? Would you take him back?" "Oh, yes," Mary whimpered, "but he doesn't care about me any more."

The lawyer phoned two members of Divorcees Anonymous, women about Mary's age, whose marriages had broken up under much the same circumstances. "They listened to my story," Mary related later. "They sympathized with me and cried a little when I cried and then they 'took me apart.' When I tried to tell them that with the baby and everything I couldn't keep myself pretty and fresh, they really landed on me."

They took Mary to a beauty parlor and then home. With needle and thread they went to work on her clothes, meanwhile giving her a double-barreled dose of mental therapy right out of the heart of their own experiences.

They saw Mary every day—lunched with her, dropped in for tea, had her to their own apartments for dinner. They worked on her mind and heart as well as her appearance. Then they took the next step. They set up a meeting between Mary and her husband. The next month Mary and her husband were "remarried." One of the women who helped Mary commented, "There was nothing wrong with her marriage.

The 'huntress' caught her man but didn't know enough to keep her bait fresh."

The art of being attractive includes all skillful adornment of the face and figure for the woman and for the man a care for his bodily welfare that will mean a maximum of pleasing appearance.

At twenty a woman has the face God gave her.

At thirty she has a face representing the goods on the drug-store counter.

At forty she has a face which displays the skill of her hair-dresser and masseuse.

At fifty her face reflects the way her husband treats her, but at sixty she has the face she gave herself.

The art of staying attractive requires skill in the use of the voice. If we cultivate the use of a pleasant voice at home, avoiding harsh, loud tones or the shrill, high pitch that grates on everybody's nerves, we shall add to the artistry of our family life. The words spoken with love and tenderness stir an answering tone that makes a harmony of heaven on earth.

#### *ADVENTURE MEANS DARING TO DEVELOP NEW ABILITIES*

Men and women alike overstress their exterior appearance and neglect their interior development. Keeping attractive is, in part, the problem of keeping ourselves alert mentally. A person who is interested in almost any subject can be interesting to others.

I like this description: "Marriage is . . . the incorporation of two separate and sharply differentiated personalities into a partnership for the adventure of life. As such it has many more aspects than the sexual. It is a business and legal entity



with financial responsibilities which both must share. It is a social unit, with personal relations reaching out into the community. It is a personal unit set over against the world, so that it is a haven of security to those partners who have confidence in each other. It is an educational institution with responsibility for an educational program for the child from the moment it is born. It is a focus of life-effort for both partners . . . In marriage two persons serve a common destiny."<sup>23</sup>

More important than the care of the body is the care of the spirit. The attitudes of sincerity and love are expressed in the face and gestures. There is an inner light that shines through the flesh and makes the whole appearance inexpressibly dear.

If your heart is right toward your mate, your appearance will be lovelier than if you are full of resentments and irritability. Happiness is the basis of real beauty.

By the habits we develop as we live together we can encourage or destroy one another.

You have abilities that can be developed. You will be more attractive as these capacities are cultivated. Neither of you will be bored if some new skill is developed every year.

Some things we should say plainly to ourselves: "No matter how good I am, I have faults. No matter how bad I am, I have virtues. No matter how much I have done, I can do more. No matter how fine the past has been, I can make the future better."

Part of the art of staying happily married is to be an interesting person with whom to live. So many of the couples I deal with are just bored with each other.

Women who are housekeepers are to be encouraged to keep their minds alert. At work a man meets new people, is stimu-

lated by new ideas and new situations. In the evenings he will be bored by his wife talking of nothing important. A wife who maintains few intellectual interests is likely to complain because her husband doesn't talk enough. Her children in school are keeping their minds sharp. A wife and mother who is content to let her mind grow rusty may try to cover up her feelings of inadequacy by attempting to impose her will upon them.

The art of adventure in marriage involves more than admiration of each other. People are attracted to one another on the highest level when they find that both are drawn toward some new goal outside themselves which they value more than themselves or their marriage. This is the importance of a vital religious experience to both husband and wife. When they realize that they are members of a team, united in the service of our common welfare they can retain the radiance of their love which is part of God's purpose for mankind.

#### *A BETTER HOME MAY BE A MUTUAL ADVENTURE*

Every family which has ever existed can be improved! Part of the adventure of living is to keep on trying to make what we have even better than it now is. You can both do much to add to the happiness of your home.

The capacity for adventure is related to the basic interest in the life of each person. You will be able to be interesting to others to the extent that your own interests are intense and varied.

*Remember anniversaries.* The birthday of each of you is important to both of you. The anniversary of your first date, of your engagement, of your marriage and the annual tender reminder of the important deaths of those near and dear to



your mate will be evidence that you have a high opinion of his importance in your life and will heighten the anticipation you have of pleasure when you are together.

*Tell each other of your hopes and plans for the future.* She may not understand all the details of your business or profession but she can grasp some of it. Let her know what is on your mind for the years ahead. He may not be able to grasp her desires about the plans she considers important but as he makes the earnest effort to understand her, their shared hopes can become a power to hold their lives together. There are risks of failure as well as success in every venture. Tell her the bad side as well as the good. Love is not possessiveness or domination or over-protection.

*How do married people develop the creativity which makes an adventure out of their shared experience—even into old age?* We grow in this skill by meeting and overcoming obstacles. The person who always has an easy life gets stuck in a rut, acquires habits of complacency and never improves. Only when we are forced by some frustration do most of us really use our minds.

Here is where the great opportunity for happy marriage opens to all of us. Every difficulty we face is a challenge to make us realize more of our potential.

We need to ask ourselves these questions: Why do so many people become discouraged in our modern world? Where do others get the courage to face the same world? What actual effect do I have on my mate? How much encouragement have I given to my marriage partner lately? What are the Christian sources of courage? How does an organization such as Alcoholics Anonymous do so much for its members? Am I finding in my church or synagogue the help I need in facing the future unashamed and unafraid?

*Cultivate the ability to see adventure in your daily experiences.* Some people go through the major adventures of life and never see the thrilling aspects, while others keep themselves sensitively aware of the possibilities of joy in the so-called "ordinary" experiences of making a home together.

*Exploring new ideas.* There are truths that two may know together that neither can learn alone. The meaning of co-operative companionship is one truth two people can learn together, but one person can never understand. "He treats me as an equal" was the way one happy young woman explained her happiness when I asked her what meant the most to her in the obvious joy they both had in their recently established marriage. When I asked him the same question he expressed a similar quality in her, "She makes me feel as if I truly were someone important to her."

Light is available for our homes from the finest books, the most inspiring music and the most beautiful paintings. Read together from the Bible, thinking about its message in terms of your own family life.

Areas abound in which adventure may be sought. In every community of fair size, beauty may be found in museums, theaters and parks. Planned, and many times unplanned, pleasure may be enjoyed in simply opening our eyes and ears to look and listen more acutely to what is happening in the changing seasons. My father taught me as a boy to thrill at the flashes of lightning and the rolls of thunder in St. Louis. I still rejoice in the display of such elemental powers.

*Travel offers a wide variety of adventures.* I know couples who have a truck with an improvised tent and bed arrangement so that their travel is very economical. Others indulge in the luxury of trips around the world. Preparing to travel, on any financial level, can add a thrill of anticipation to your



life. Just to drive from Atlanta, Georgia, to the Atlantic Ocean can be filled with romance.

*We can bring the thrill of new adventure into our homes through hobbies.* Many games are available now which add zest to the hours we may spend together. The main point is that we secure something fresh to increase our interest. Almost anything constructive that will turn our thoughts away from ourselves, our frustrations and our failures will open up avenues to restore our confidence. Families that share games and hobbies are happier than those who never take time to enjoy playing together. The hobby family is usually a happy one.

I have watched couples actually build a house together, in their spare time, doing all the manual labor and receiving a strong tie of mutuality out of mixing the concrete or nailing the boards.

*Hiking together is a pleasure.* What walks my wife and I have enjoyed! I remember a New Year's Day when we walked from Des Moines, Iowa, several miles west to a little village and took the train back. Our two older sons and I spent a week on the Appalachian Trail, sleeping at night in a pup tent and carrying our food on our backs.

*Friendships are a source of adventure open to all.* My wife and I consider visiting in the homes of Atlanta as one of our greatest pleasures. What can be more stimulating than people? Either good or bad, we find a never-failing source of delight in persons we meet.

*The relation of parents to children can be an adventure* as each individual boy or girl grows up. Our daughter and her husband take their little three-year-old boy to the public library in Dallas, Texas, show him how to locate the book he

wants and are already opening the wonderful world of knowledge to him.

The happiness we have with each other can be improved as we create more confidence in each other, facing shoulder-to-shoulder the great experiences of birth, sickness, joy and death of those we love. In marriage both may find a zest for living and a courage to accept the essential pain which human life some day inevitably brings.

We are losing something of immense importance when we permit our attitudes to age. A young father recently told me of his disappointment with his wife, "She has lost the hope that some interesting new experience may be just around the corner."

*Sex can be an adventure.* Many of those I counsel are afraid of sex. They can not acknowledge openly that they are sexual beings. Repeatedly I say to them, "What God was not ashamed to make, you need not be ashamed to be."

A man and woman bound in holy ties of marriage may learn together the joy of a satisfying sex life. This can mean an adventure in increasing, rather than diminishing, the pleasure of living together over many years.

In considering the power of shared adventure to strengthen a marriage, we need to think through more carefully our attitudes toward novelty in the most intimate relation of husband and wife. Sex can be a constructive and strengthening force within a marriage. No author I have ever read has dealt adequately with the "religious use" of sex itself. Remember:

- 1) The purpose of such pleasure that we may give to our mate in intercourse is to strengthen our acceptance of each other as persons who have been created by God, and who are worthwhile each in his own right.



- 2) Nothing should be done, which is physically harmful or emotionally repulsive to either husband or wife.
- 3) Immaculate care for personal bodily cleanliness is essential always.

Occasionally I see an idealistic couple who try too hard to do too much and defeat themselves in the process. To a young married woman I recently said, "Please remember that, in almost any school, 70 is a passing grade, and don't expect to get a mark of 'perfect' on every experience you have."

The purpose of God is that persons live in loving relationships to each other. In the great truths declared in Genesis about the creation of our world and of our race are the challenges we need to lift our thinking about sex into a perspective which will help us recognize the immense values of what we have.

*Mutual growth in spiritual power can be an adventure.* Many research studies have shown that marriages with a shared religious foundation have a much better average of success than those when the husband and wife live together on a secular level. We need the warmth and light which God's power makes available in the home, which God Himself sustains and of whose beauty we humans may partake.

This is not determined by our creed or denomination. I know happy homes in all churches and I also have close knowledge of unhappy families in all churches. But the ability of a husband and wife to make their marriage a happy experience grows from membership in the same congregation, from a reasonable participation in the program of that church and from their loyalty to Christ. The closer we are drawn to Him, the nearer and dearer we shall be to each other.

Out of an ancient past, marred with the lusts of savagery,

we have come to the day when, for all our evil, men and women are learning to use together the gracious gifts of a loving God. In the hearts of many couples that I know is this attitude: "O my beloved! in whom I trust and for whom I have a deathless love! To you I owe much that is fine about the growth of myself! For your sake I will be true to the God whom we have learned to serve together."

What is the supreme value in human life? Christ taught that we are to "seek first His kingdom" (Matthew 6:33). We are to try earnestly to do what is right in God's sight. One of the valid goals included in this is to have peace and harmony in our families. The greatest skill is to have a goal outside ourselves which we value more than ourselves or even our marriage. This is the importance of a vital religious experience. When a husband and wife are members of a team, united in doing together what is right in God's sight, they retain the radiance of their love which is part of God's purpose for mankind.

#### *HAPPY HOMES ARE HELPED BY GROWING PERSONS*

The most effective way to improve our homes is to improve each person. How have you developed into a finer person in the last year? What talents do you have which are not developed?

How can we keep growing in mind and spirit all our lives? Only by eternal vigilance, by never being satisfied with ourselves! The art of adventure means daring to develop new abilities. A person interested in almost any subject can be interesting to others.

What books have you recently read and what did each mean to you? The astronauts soon hope to take the adventurous journey to the moon and then to Mars. Even greater



adventures in inner space are possible than those in outer space.

Why do you seek for or withdraw from new experiences? Part of the answer is in your past. Another part may be in your associates, but most of all will be in your main purposes, those deepest desires of which you may not even be conscious.

How can I develop the capacity to risk myself when danger is always implied in each forward movement? Some time ago I attended a meal in our church where one of our young girls played a musical solo. Afterwards she asked, "How did I do, Mama?" and her mother replied, "Dear, you were just perfect." The smile I saw on her bright young face marked one more step taken to winning the battle for self-confidence which makes courage possible.

Here is an important element in staying happily married. Both husband and wife begin by accepting each other. Out of such acceptance affection grows. Then their association together creates a relationship which makes possible achievements which are deeply satisfying and adventures which brighten all their years.

#### *BEING SEPARATED CAN BE AN ADVENTURE—FOR GOOD OR BAD*

After two years of foreign military service, John returned to his home with Harriett in Alabama. He had made a fine record with the army and the first few months at home seemed ideally happy to them both and to their two children. When he came to my study he had been back about six months and was greatly worried about his home. His main questions were, "Does my wife still love me? Is it natural for married love to cool into a lukewarm, uninteresting existence?" He did not want her to know he had been to see me

and repeatedly expressed his high opinion of her ability. He thought something was wrong and did not know what it was.

The next month he returned to the district office in Atlanta under which he worked and came to see me, "I think I know more of what may be wrong. Harriett says I'm trying to run our home like I did my part of the army. She complains I act as though she were some private in the rear rank and that I never ask her opinion." As he talked he seemed to be slowly feeling his way toward a more definite opinion on what had been happening at home as he said, "I guess I've been partly to blame but I don't really mean to be bossy. If you'll talk to her, I'll try to get her to come with me on my trip next month."

When the two of them came the following month, as he had suggested, and it was her opportunity to talk, she said, "When John was away I had to make all the decisions. Now he wants to make them all by himself and ignores me. We ought to pull together instead of apart." The rest of the time they talked quietly on the subject of what could be done to share decisions. I was an interested spectator and had little to do with the details as they went into this constructive session, yet both of them were demonstrative in expressions of how much I had done for them when they were leaving. They might have worked their problem out eventually by themselves but having an interested person who was fair to both of them seemed to help.

The conditions of modern business separate many couples, with the man leaving every Sunday night or Monday morning on his sales trips and not returning until Friday night or Saturday morning. The resulting tensions may be good or bad depending on the way they are handled.

When a man and wife come back together after even a



brief period of separation, much can be done to share what has happened. The memory of jokes; the relating of the little incidents of the hours apart can stimulate the moments they are together. The point is that we do not *have* to be bored. If we want to have a good time, we can do so anywhere and we can find some subject of mutual interest with everyone from the janitor who sweeps our floors to the chancellor of our university system.

### THE HUSBAND'S PART

Here are some suggestions specifically for the husband as he seeks to develop his skill in the art of adventure so that his marriage may continue to be a happy experience to both of them.

Be as entertaining at home as you are when in company. Treat her with courtesy in public.

Last spring a couple came to me for help. She said, "He's the life of the party when we go out but at home he's a stuffed shirt . . ." "I didn't realize how you felt about it," another man said to his wife in my study after she expressed her resentment of the way he had criticized her in front of friends.

The art of staying happily married through keeping the essential element of freshness is practiced when a husband helps his wife into her coat, carries her packages when they are together on the street, suggests that she precede him through doorways, helps her off the bus or train by getting off first and waiting with outstretched hand for her to descend, and in every other way possible, indicates that he has not become bored with her company and is not taking her for granted.

The husband's opinion of what his wife is doing means

much to her. If she must work and he shows his appreciation, it will help her to continue this as long as necessary. If she can give her full time to the important business of making a home, he should recognize that this is a valued and worthwhile occupation and should praise her contribution to the success of the family.

Be fair about money. She is entitled to have her say about what is done with all the income both of you receive. Let her know the full facts and share in the decision.

John is a successful businessman. He has had the thrill of saving money. As the bank account grew he became more and more stingy, denying even necessities to his children and his wife. When she forced a show-down with him and they came to see me his defense was, "I love them so much that when I die I want them well-provided for." He seemed to forget that in the meantime they had to live.

To husbands I often say, "Be the leader in your home." Frequently men are not the head of the house because they are not morally and spiritually ready for responsibility. The modern father can influence his home with this decision, "As for me and my house, we will serve the lord" (Joshua 24:15).

### *THE WIFE'S PART*

Women usually will do more to save their home than men. Women are more forgiving, more tolerant, more patient as a rule, but let a woman once get her mind made up that the man is beyond her influence and a woman's mind is hard to change. Stay open-minded. No matter how difficult your problem is, try to be part of the solution to the problem and not part of the problem itself.

Keep yourself mentally alert. Women will often try to escape through excessive card games, parties and other social



events. I have tried to make it clear elsewhere in this book how important it is to have normal relaxation. This is no blanket condemnation of wholesome amusements, but a constant diet of bridge, canasta, bingo and gossip can deaden anybody's mind.

Most churches and synagogues have special organizations for their women such as Councils, Sisterhoods, Guilds, Circles, etc. These can be vital and stimulating, but they can also be just as pernicious as the general social groups. The central purpose of such women's organizations is to stimulate personal growth in the members as well as to help others. The test questions about all such activities may well be, "Am I a better person because I went to the meeting?" and "Did I help anybody else by attending?"

As the children require less time with their lessons, a mother can read more books to develop her own mental life. There are many discussion groups in churches and synagogues, and good adult education extension courses are available from almost all universities.

## Questions to Ask and to Answer

*For each to think through "on his own."*

How do I think of myself in comparison to others?

WHAT do I do when I feel inferior? superior?

WHAT have I learned to do in the past year which I did not know how to do previously?

WHY do I seek for or withdraw from new experiences?

WHAT talents do I have which are not developed?

*For each to tell about and to discuss with the other.*

WHAT books have I recently read and what did each mean to me?

WHAT is my best hobby and how can we share it more?

IN what ways can I please you more?

Do you have any complaints about my behavior?

How are you willing to help me change?

*For both to consider together.*

How can we draw the best out of each other?

WHAT reasonable goals can we hope to reach together?

WHAT new experiences have we shared in the last year?

WHAT possible additional skill could we both acquire in the next year?

WHAT do we agree is the supreme value in human life?



*PART III*

THE THREE STAGES  
OF MARRIAGE

## 8

### *How to Live Happily in the Early Years*

#### *THE HONEYMOON OR THE FIRST THIRTY DAYS*

 **H**ONEYMOONS ARE better when they are spent among strangers who will largely leave the young couple to themselves.

Percy and Betty had relatives in Nashville where both had been born, with whom they spent all of the two weeks he could get away from work. A visit to them should have been made later, as indicated by Betty's remark when they came to see me a week after returning to Atlanta, "We had other people around so much we were 'on our own' very little. The next time we take a trip we are *not* going near Nashville."



In planning for the honeymoon a short trip with ample time for rest is to be preferred to a cross-country endurance contest. George and Lydia drove from Atlanta to Seattle, about six thousand miles round trip, on a honeymoon which lasted less than a month. They came home nervous and quarrelsome. The bad influence of that experience has stayed with them a long time.

On a wedding trip the minor mishaps need to be taken in stride. I recall the couple who started in high glee on their honeymoon. The first day one of the tires blew out on a hot south Georgia highway. Before he could get it fixed she was in tears and he was furiously cursing. A chuckle would have helped. Furthermore, a recap job on the smooth tires beforehand could have avoided the whole incident.

Other practical suggestions for honeymooners include arranging in advance for hotel rooms, and removal of all pressure of engagements, since honeymooners usually are "early to bed and late to rise."

Complete sexual satisfaction normally may be delayed beyond the honeymoon. The first efforts at this may be made more difficult by nervousness. Many times I say to a man just before their wedding, "Be gentle with this girl on the first night you are in bed together. She has been reared in modesty which she cannot forsake at once. Do not mar your physical relationship by unnecessary roughness." At the same conference I often say to the woman, "It is right in the sight of God and man alike for you to try to please your husband. Do the best you can to let him know through your most intimate expression of affection that you trust him completely and gladly accept him as a man." The usual intense emotional expressions of the first period of marriage can be a means of

strengthening the relation of the man and wife to each other.

The sexual adjustment in the first phase of marriage may be slow in achieving satisfaction. Early intercourse is often awkward and anxiety adds to the difficulty but better than 90 per cent of all the couples I marry report an achievement of physical harmony which is acceptable to both of them within the first month of marriage.

When a couple returns from a honeymoon, they face the problem of the daily duties. He has to go to work. She also may need to be employed outside of the home.

### *IMPORTANT DECISIONS MADE SOON AFTER THE WEDDING*

Several important decisions are made early in marriage. *We choose a place to live.* The early period of establishing a home can be even happier than the honeymoon. Cooking the first meal together can be fun. Getting settled, when both share in the moving, can become a game. Buying the furniture provides an opportunity to share in making important decisions. Here all five human needs are usually being met—acceptance, affection, association, achievement and adventure.

*We choose our eating habits.* What we eat influences our emotional and mental health. How much we eat is a factor in the length of our life and how we feel while living.

Neurotic tendencies, moods, headaches, digestive upsets, etc., are sometimes related to our food. I recall a wife who had migraine headaches so severe that she was unable to carry her share of the work around the home. For several days at a time she went to bed. After the main attack had subsided she snapped at her husband with unpleasant and vicious comments. A physician discovered she was suffering from food poisoning; with a new diet she was a different woman.



One husband reported, "We're doing swell since Jane stopped drinking orange juice," to which she was allergic.

Meals served soon after a man comes home from work are doubly appreciated by him. If he is delayed at work, the husband should phone the probable hour of his arrival.

*We choose our living scale.* Here I want simply to touch on the main aspect of this in the first three years of married life. Unpaid debts are a nagging torment. People whose judgment really counts will think more of you if you live modestly. Nobody expects you to start out on the level your parents achieved after a lifetime of effort.

*We choose our recreation.* Too often, the young wife plays canasta or bridge while her husband is on the golf course. Some of this time apart is good but playing together is important.

Some forms of recreation stimulate the mind. Games and crafts at home help. Music, painting or any other art can be started early. Playing instruments such as the piano, violin, banjo, etc., together can be a means of strengthening the home.

*Just plain family fun is a tonic to stimulate everybody.* The spontaneous combustion of energy and good humor gives a frolic on the spur of the moment. The strain under which most parents exist is eased when they give themselves to play for its own sake.

Heaven has blessed the man or wife who has a sense of humor naturally. But everybody can cultivate the ability to chuckle. Laugh at yourself! It will do you good! The Bible tells us, "A cheerful heart is a good medicine" (Proverbs 17:22).

Young married couples need friends who also are married. Most of the time a majority of their friends before marriage

will be unmarried. Companions in early married life determine much of the *quality* in any home. The statement of Paul is still true, "Bad company ruins good morals" (I Corinthians 15:33). Watch out for couples who are themselves unhappy. I have observed the malicious efforts of such people as they sought to destroy other homes.

The first quarrel of Sally and Kell occurred on the Saturday morning after they came back from their honeymoon. He phoned from the office to tell her that three of the other men and he had plans made to play golf and he was coming home to get his clubs. She was surprised that he would want to be away from her and he was just as shocked that she would object to what seemed to him a normal continuance of old friendships. She cried over the phone and when he came home she sobbed, "Kell, how can you leave me alone? We ought to be with each other." She refused to *accept* him as an individual with rights to some preservation of his own selfhood.

Each will be fresher and more interesting if there are some periods of separation for recreation or other stimulating outside activities. I have known many successful homes where the wife had an evening each week with her girl friends and the husband took Saturday afternoon to fish or play golf or swim with his cronies.

*We choose the way we settle our differences.* The advice some mothers give their daughters before marriage is a real hindrance to their marital success. Mrs. Goodman on the night of the wedding rehearsal warned her daughter, "It won't be all peaches and cream. No marriage ever is— You'll have your arguments just like every other couple. Just remember this, Alice, win in your first argument! No matter how trivial, win that one and the rest will take care of them-



selves nicely. Go to any lengths, even if you have to leave him for a while. You can always come home to me." One young couple surprised me by returning the day after they had been married! They had been quarreling since early that morning. The only point they could agree on was to come and see me. Both were spoiled children, whose parents had pampered them. Never had either of them been crossed at home. They had to learn the art of give-and-take the hard way. They tried after some blunt talk from me—and they're still married.

*We choose our lawyer.* I urgently request every couple to make a will early in their marriage. Most couples have very few material assets as they begin their home but I have watched with growing concern the legal tangle created by a death where no will was made. The laws governing this vary from state to state, but in Georgia a small estate may be completely consumed by the unnecessary expense of settling the financial affairs of a person who died without a will. Several lawyers I know will write a will for a young couple at a nominal fee.

*We choose a family physician.* He should be consulted about your general physical condition so that before sudden illness he will know something about both of you. If specialists are needed, he can recommend competent practitioners. In the larger cities, some physicians give all their time to diagnosis of patients. Since I request a physical examination prior to marriage, this doctor could suggest a family physician.

*We choose to start our family.* Four out of every five new homes in this country will have a baby within three years. What do these children do to our homes? What do our homes do to these children? Both questions are important, and when

we understand the answers we have insights which greatly increase our skills in the art of staying happily married.

The birth of the first child creates a drastic change in the nature of the relation between man and wife. The arrival of the first baby may be the most religious event in the life of a couple. Every child is a gift of God. Each new life has meanings that stir a sensitive man and woman. There is a certain strangeness about the first baby, a new and sobering awareness that is profoundly satisfying. Here is the opportunity for a pastor to show by his visit with prayer the deep Christian meaning of the birth of a baby.

The drive home from the hospital by father and mother with their child brings a new oneness to the two of them. He will probably drive, or sit beside her in the seat of a taxicab or the car of a friend. In her arms is their baby, a child of their love and the love of the Heavenly Father.

"Have your children while you're young," I have replied to many couples who have asked when I thought they should plan for their first child. "Certainly you need some time to get used to being husband and wife before you make the many adjustments to being father and mother but do not wait too long. Discuss together what conditions you consider necessary to your emotional and economic life before conception takes place. Do not set the standards too high. Have a baby as soon as you both agree you are ready to become parents."

*We choose our church.* The church has done so much for civilization that it deserves an important place in your planning. There are *two main questions* any young couple should ask as they decide on a church. First, where can we *get* the most? Where can we receive the instruction and information that will help us face the problems of daily life? Second,



where can we *give* the most? What church needs us and will provide an opportunity for the maximum use of our abilities? Both "getting" and "giving" are required. The more you receive, the more you can give. Giving itself is one way of receiving. "You get back what you put in" is the popular statement. A vital church relationship will provide friendship with other earnest people, guidance from God's Word in our personal problems, the awareness of a larger world of spiritual values to which our individual family is related, the stimulation of other minds as we study the major issues of the world.

A pastor or rabbi means much to any couple but there are certain special values if a man and wife are just beginning a home. Both of you may confide in him. If he has been long in service, he has probably helped many other young couples in similar situations.

I have had a number of couples come to me during the first year of marriage with a statement such as this, "Our home isn't what we expected it to be. We are both disappointed. What is wrong?" They need a purpose which is bigger than either of them and a relationship greater than both of them. This we provide when we bring them to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ with personal commitment to His cause on earth.

At the end of the first three years occurs the first of the two major peaks in the graph of number of homes broken each year by divorce. The second comes at the close of the "peak years" when the last of the children leaves home.

#### *WHAT ABOUT BIRTH CONTROL?*

For the wife to become pregnant immediately after marriage is not wise. Time is needed to adjust to each other and

to work out the habits of their day by day lives. Even when ample money is available to pay for the expense of a child, conception should be postponed at least from three to six months. Couples need some time to get used to being husband and wife before they have to adjust to a whole new life as father and mother of a tiny baby.

The advice of a physician, birth control clinic, or maternal health association should be sought by each couple. The methods advocated by such competent sources have been tested by hundreds of thousands of families and will remove the fear of premature pregnancy which is such an obstacle to many young couples.

The basic idea of family planning is almost everywhere approved. The real disagreement is over the methods which may be used to avoid conception. Certain methods are forbidden by the Roman Catholic Church to their members and they are bound by solemn promises to abide by those teachings. For the rest of us, the main problem is to find which method will best suit our needs. One source of reliable information is the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, 501 Madison Avenue, New York 22, New York.

Only in the twentieth century has planning for parenthood been widely accepted. Before that children arrived in whatever frequency they might until the mother gratefully passed the period of having children. Those who wish information regarding the birth-control clinic in their community may write to the American Birth Control League, 104 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

A familiar crisis among the young married couples is created by the unexpected and unwelcome pregnancy. Joan and Tom were married by me four years ago. Conception took place in the first few weeks. Tom was about twenty at



the time and unprepared for the responsibilities of parenthood. Three months after their marriage they came to my study.

After letting both of them express themselves freely for a half hour I said, "There are scores of couples in my church who would give anything they possess to be in your place today. They have been trying for years to have a baby and failed. You have something very valuable within your grasp. Are you going to throw it away?" Looking directly at him I said, "Do you want your own child to grow up without a father?" They stuck it out and after the baby was born have continued to be one of the happiest couples in Atlanta.

Suppose conception does take place because of carelessness in not following instructions, what shall be done? Abortion is always dangerous, leaving bodily and mental damage beyond computation. Even though not planned, the birth of this baby may bring greater joy to both husband and wife than would otherwise have been achieved.

#### ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Three attitudes are taken by married people toward children. The coming of a child does not guarantee the happiness of a home. The influence of a baby to hold a couple together or to drive them apart depends on what basic attitudes prevail between them.

*First, some persons do not want any children.* They resent the inconvenience and expense babies cause. Several such situations stand out in my mind. A couple married years ago came to me with their home on the verge of destruction. As they sat in my study she opened the discussion, "I want to have a baby. He refuses to allow this. I don't see any sense

to being married if we reject the possibility of a child." She had a human hunger which was normal. They are still married and now have two children but I had to do some plain talking to him about her right to have children. Such cases have led me to ask people to come to some agreement prior to their marriage about having children.

Here is what the Bible teaches concerning this. "I would have younger women marry, bear children, rule their households, and give the enemy no occasion to revile us" (I Timothy 5:14).

*Second, other couples passively accept children as an inevitable nuisance* in much the same spirit that they reluctantly endure the other responsibilities of earning a living or keeping house. They get away from their children as fast as they can on every pretense.

*Third, many couples earnestly desire children.* They are conscious of their glorious privilege as co-workers with God in the onward movement of creation.

The Bible has many references such as this expressing the joys of having a large family.

Lo, sons are a heritage from the Lord,  
the fruit of the womb a reward.  
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior  
are the sons of one's youth.  
Happy is the man who has  
his quiver full of them.

(Psalms 127:3-5)

The adoption of a child satisfies a strong parental impulse. I know several couples who had been childless for years who had a baby of their own within two years of such adoption. More than thirty families in the congregation I serve have



adopted children. They have worked out just as well as the children born within the family circle.

If you are considering the adoption of a baby, try to face these questions. Are you ready to be as fair to this adopted child as you will be to your own if later you have one? Will you plan to tell the child that he is "chosen" at an early age?

### *CHILDREN CHANGE THE CLIMATE OF A HOME*

About 1850 it was a triumph even to rear a child. An estimated one in every four babies died within the first year of their birth. Now infant mortality is the lowest ever in the history of our race. People all over the world are having more babies than ever. The population explosion seems to extend to almost every country.

In the life of any married couple, the most important event may be the arrival of their first child. Here is the bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, living evidence of their physical oneness. This child is a gift from God, born not only of their human love for one another but made possible by the love of their Heavenly Father.

Among the hundreds of young married couples I see each year, there is a keen anxiety as to what to do and what not to do about their children.

Jesus seemed to think that the way we treated children was important. "Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me: but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to fall, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:5-6).

One of the mothers in our church was criticized by a thoughtless friend for continuing her teaching in the Church School instead of letting her new baby take all her time in

these words, "Henry's days as a baby are so short I would think you would not want to do anything else but take care of him." The mother answered, "I keep a better perspective if I can be away a little. It makes me a better person to keep in touch with my friends and with the work of the church."

Paul and Janet had made all arrangements for their divorce when they came to me. The lawyers had agreed on all details of the settlement of property and personal affairs. A friend suggested that as a last resort they come to me. It looked hopeless as I listened to their story. Both expressed themselves freely in the first hour.

I did not know if I could do them any good but at the close asked, "Do you want to come back to me again?" He said, "We've talked more today than we have in years. If Janet will come, I'd like to see what we can do." The appointment was made, but before it came a tearful Janet called, "Our baby is sick and I can't get away. I'll call you later when we can come." I expressed my concern about the child and had hardly hung up the phone when his voice sounded at the other end of the wire, "You remember that talk about our getting a divorce. It's all off—our kid's sick and we've got to stick together."

The routine of every home is changed by the coming of a child. Both parents stay at home more. The center of attention shifts from either or both of them to this new life. Whether the "demand feeding" or the "regular schedule" plan of nourishment is followed, the baby must be fed. No matter how tired the parents are, if baby needs attention in the midnight hours, someone must attend to him.

When the first child arrives, many young couples grow bitter at being homebound because they have sought their entertainment almost entirely outside their home. Couples



can begin early to learn how to enjoy just being together. If they genuinely accept each other and have strong ties of affection, then their closer association after their baby is born will be a source of joy leading to an awareness of their shared achievements and giving the thrill of new adventures.

The longing to have our children become better persons than we have been is as old as our race. "He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, to teach to their children: that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn; and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments, and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast and whose spirit was not faithful to God" (Psalm 78:5-8).

#### *TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR YOUNG PARENTS*

- I. Remember that God has given you the child.
- II. Remember that you are yourself a child of God.
- III. Provoke not the child to wrath.
- IV. Set aside the time each week to play with the child.  
This is more important than the golf game or the bridge club.
- V. Respect the child, and give him the courtesy you expect from him.
- VI. Do not kill his initiative.
- VII. Do not nag.
- VIII. Do not take from him the right to think for himself.
- IX. Do not lie to him about anything.
- X. Do not covet his youth but rejoice in your own maturity.

*RIGHT FROM THE START BE FAITHFUL*

Mankind has discovered in its long upward climb that one man and one woman living together on a permanent basis is the most enduring as well as the most rewarding form of marriage. How the sexual side of their marriage is handled has a great deal to do with the whole success of their home. The determination to make their home succeed, to stick together no matter what happens, to make this marriage work, form a solid basis for a happy home.

When either has had sexual intercourse prior to marriage it seems harder for them to stay married. Men must have faith in the women they marry and they stay married happily best when such faith is strengthened year by year by the open attitude of each to the other. Scores of couples such as the recent visitors to my study have demonstrated the added emotional load of pre-marital intercourse by either or both of them.

After a few opening remarks on the first visit by himself a very attractive man said, "The night we were married my wife told me of several affairs she had had. She is a very sophisticated person who thought she would please me by some skills she had acquired in the art of intercourse with other men but I have been miserable these past three years in my loss of confidence in her. I really thought I was marrying a virgin and now I often wonder if she is really satisfied with me."

In discussing this with me the next day she expressed her surprise, "I thought this did not make any difference to a man and that I would please him by knowing what to do." They came together for several conferences in which they found the grace to forgive each other and to accept God's forgiving love.



When you want to tell the person you are married to about some moral failure on your part in the past, you need to ask yourself searchingly these questions. Why do I want to tell this? Will telling it help those I love or hurt them? Have I made a full confession first of all to God and received His forgiveness? If not, would it be wise first to go to some minister of God and let him help me to the throne of grace?

A marital crisis can be the result of the jealousy many young women feel during pregnancy and the immaturity of the husband who is unfaithful. Two such unhappy persons recently sat in my presence. He said, "There is no use being accused of something when you are innocent. She said I'd had intercourse with Lola, so I did."

It is better for one man to be loyal to one woman and for one woman to be loyal to one man. Many have tried unfaithfulness and it brings only tragedy and tears.

The dangerous delusion shared by too many couples forced to separate by war, is that sexual chastity may lead to mental disorders because of frustration. But many of the worst neurotics I see are those who have promiscuously abandoned their marriage vows.

Sexual affairs with other women may indicate a man's failure to satisfy his wife and to receive himself any adequate satisfaction. As he seeks unconsciously to make up in quantity for what he lacks in quality, he becomes less and less sure of himself and more and more neurotic with each experience.

Likewise the promiscuous wife becomes the victim of her own misconduct. She gives herself physically, but not on a basis which affords her personal satisfaction, until at last she loses the capacity for satisfactory sex relations. She ends up frigid—and frustrated. Sexual intercourse with any other man than her husband deprives a woman of the emotional dignity

necessary to her security. For the woman there must always be the feeling that she is truly loved by the man to whom she gives her body.

The daily papers carried recently the story of a Cleveland married woman charged with adultery who stated in court that she saw nothing wrong with what she had done. In Los Angeles another woman declared that she loved her husband but resented being "limited" to any one man.

Doctors at the "promiscuity clinic" of the San Francisco Department of Public Health discovered that promiscuous girls often had been emotionally crippled by lack of love. They were incapable of any mature love relation, and neither gave nor received love in their sex behavior but they had, nevertheless, "an excessive need for love based upon the unfulfilled needs of their childhood."

Sexual intercourse may become a strong bond uniting the personalities and meeting several of the needs of each person. Without this meeting of the human needs of both husband and wife in their intimate relations a marriage is weakened. A deeply distressed husband remarked to me about his sex life, "We don't go to bed together any more. There is nothing between us to make sex satisfying to either of us."

"On the other hand, Fred and Mabel are examples of happily married people. Fred comes home from a busy plant full of the doings of the day. He tells Mabel how grouchy the boss is, how green his new assistant is, how much progress he is making on his new machine, what he had for lunch, and what a funny duck he got to talking to on the way home on the bus. This conversation takes up most of the dinner hour; it leaves Fred relaxed at having spilled his day's experiences and gives Mabel the feeling that she has been a part of Fred's day.



"Mabel too has things to relate. She wants to share excerpts of the letter she has just received from her folks. She is eager to discuss with Fred what they will do with her mother when she goes (this last letter tells of another heart attack, and both Fred and Mabel know that some day soon there will be one too many of them). Although they don't reach a final decision, Mabel senses that Fred is back of her—whatever happens—and she feels a sudden burst of affection for her good old dependable Fred right there while they are finishing dessert. She gets confidence to confess that she has been running over her budget for the month, which they talk over with some heat. They end up with an understanding of the financial situation, and the atmosphere is cleared, leaving them both relieved.

"After supper they do the dishes together. Fred drops and breaks the jelly dish. Mabel starts to fuss and then admits that she hated the thing anyway. They got it last Christmas from Aunt Harriet, whom she always has disliked. Fred grins and says, he can't stand her either as he kisses the back of Mabel's neck. She leans against him for a moment and observes that this is one thing she likes about him, they both dislike the same people.

"Aunt Harriet gets a going over by both of them as they move into the living room and turn on the radio. Their favorite mystery program comes on for a half-hour, leaving them feeling as if they too had been out on an adventure. Fred puts on some records that they both enjoy and goes over his paper once more, and Mabel sews in front of the fire. The clock strikes ten as the symphony hour comes on. They are both tired but agree to stay up until the program is over. Mabel puts up her sewing and stretches out on the sofa. Fred drops his paper and comes over to sit beside her. As a

favorite passage of music flows into the room, Fred squeezes Mabel's hand and smiles into her eyes.

"By bed time there has developed a strong sense of belonging to each other, a feeling of true unity. Sexual intercourse then becomes not just a physical release, but a symbol of the whole relationship. Into it flow the meanings and the feeling tones of the music and Fred's boss and Mabel's mother and all the security that has come from working it all through together.

"Next morning Fred gets up feeling like a million and leaves for work with the conviction that it would take a dozen bosses to get him down today. Mabel goes out to shop with a tune on her lips, and in her mind a resolution to economize. Both face the new day with a new poise, more peace, more strength and courage, because the two are one."<sup>24</sup>

#### *IN-LAWS MAY BE ASSETS OR LIABILITIES*

In the thousands of homes in conflict which I have seen, there have been hundreds of complaints by daughters-in-law about the husband's mother. I can only recall two occasions when a son-in-law considered that his wife's parents were partly responsible for the difficulty.

The "inferiority" of in-laws is a difficult problem, but in many homes it can be alleviated. When Ann came weeping to my study because her mother-in-law had a habit of dropping in unexpectedly and criticizing the housekeeping, I made a point of seeing her husband Roger, soon.

"Why don't you and Ann make a standing date to have dinner with your mother on Wednesday night?" I told him. "Have her as your guest one week and go to her house the next. Then tell her you wish she'd make her other visits to your home at a time when you could be there to enjoy them.



Ask her always to telephone before she comes so you can be sure to be there."

Later, alone, I explained to Ann that Roger's mother was lonesome and a bit jealous and might appreciate being asked for her opinion occasionally on suitable matters.

Relatives are a real problem to many of the couples who confide in me. I have known several wives who resented what they thought was the husband's excessive attention to his mother. In a good many homes, the threatened break was complicated by the wife's resentment of her husband's mother's inferiority.

Millions of American families today are complicated by having grandparents, uncles and aunts, married children or boarders in the household.

In several instances I have asked the parents of the young couple to see me and explain that it is better to let the newlyweds find the answers themselves and make their own errors than to continue to give advice which is not wanted. Normal young people want to be on their own. Older parents are welcomed on visits, and if sickness comes, children will call for them quickly, but in-laws shouldn't get in their way, or antagonize them by trying to tell them how to do everything "the way I used to do."

Judge Thomas Cunningham, formerly of the Domestic Relations Court of the Superior Court in Los Angeles, explains to some of the couples whose homes he saves, "When a man marries, his first loyalty is to his wife." In one such case of in-law-trouble Judge Cunningham suggested a transfer to another city. Six months later the husband wrote the judge from Tulsa. Away from his mother, he and Gwen were getting along beautifully.

At the time I married Glenn and Adine his attitude of antagonism to her mother and sisters was obvious. He thought that the more she loved them, the less she would love him. In insisting that she sever her ties, dear through many years, he made her very unhappy. After several years of unhappiness he finally saw that he could add the joy and confidence of her people to his own life.

### *ALCOHOL IS NO "FAMILY FRIEND"*

How about alcohol in the home? The growing use of beverage alcohol is a revelation of the increasing unhappiness in many families. Lacking any abiding satisfaction within themselves, people are seeking to escape from tensions and anxieties through alcohol.

The use of beverage alcohol in any form is destructive to the happiness of any home. In the United States there are 70 million men and women who habitually use drinks with alcoholic content. Of these over five million are "excessive drinkers" and many of these became "chronic alcoholics" as reported in the 1962 bulletin of the National Council on Alcoholism, Inc.

In staying happily married we need to be at our best. Even in small amounts, alcohol slows our mental processes. A drink never made a husband wiser or a wife more intelligent. Alcohol depresses the higher brain centers and impairs the power of judgment, discretion and control.

Alcohol is one of the worst enemies of successful family life. Our national Health Problem Number Four is now alcoholism. The movies try to persuade us that drinking is "smart" and "stimulating."

Here is the explanation by a California state official of why



the movies make such frequent use of drinking scenes, "There is a lot of drinking in pictures because years ago directors discovered that many people came to Hollywood to get into pictures who had a beautiful face or figure, but who could not act. When people cannot act, they show it first in the awkward use of their hands. They don't know what to do with them. Directors discovered long ago that if they could stick a cigarette in one hand and a cocktail in the other, their so-called actors could look nonchalant and sophisticated even if they could not act."

I recently heard a drama critic say that directors were ruining drama because of so much drinking. "When you get a little suspense," he said to the directors, "instead of having somebody act it through on the high level that makes great drama, you have someone say, 'Let's have a cocktail.' You break the spirit and ruin acting. Cut it out," he concluded.

Alcohol does not pep you up. It lets you down. It will put you to sleep if you drink it in more than moderate quantities. It is habit forming so that even if you intend to drink moderately you may not be able to stop.

An old saw goes, "After a few drinks a German wants to sing, an Irishman wants to fight, a Frenchman wants to make a speech." An amendment needs to be put in that to the effect that after an American has a few drinks he is apt to want to get in a car with some member of the opposite sex and see how fast and how far they can go—in more ways than one. The resultant breakup of homes is only one of the bad effects.

How many times have I heard, "What shall I do? You know how unhappy Henry and I have been for years. The children love him but he comes home drunk every night. He abuses me mercilessly."

*THE FINANCES OF A HOME MAY HELP OR HINDER  
A HAPPY MARRIAGE*

Approximately two out of five of the family feuds I see have symptoms which are directly related to the mismanagement of money. Each home is a business enterprise; looked at over a period of years—no small affair.

The economic aspect of a family is recognized in law. A husband in the United States is responsible legally and morally for the debts of his wife. A wife is morally responsible for the debts of her husband.

There was the young wife who ran a power sewing machine and told her story in these words: "My husband, left an orphan, never had a chance to go to school and learn a trade. He is a teamster. He makes very little money but he loves me enough to trust me with all he earns. We have nothing that rich people have and we are boarding until we can furnish a little home for ourselves. My husband does not go to saloons or places of that sort and he seldom goes out for pleasure without me. Do you think it hurts me that he cannot give me fine clothes when every day he tells me I am the best thing God ever gave him? Every night he kisses my hands that have worked so hard all day. We have been married over a year and never a cross word. I did not know anyone could be so happy. Do you think I mind working to help a man like that? His love makes everything worthwhile."<sup>25</sup>

Postponing marriage for financial reasons is a serious threat to stable home life and once the home is established living beyond their means destroys their awareness of strength. A home can start on relatively little and it can continue on less than many couples waste.

The International News Service sometime ago carried a



story from London, "British Quakers have advised young couples who are 'sure' they are in love to marry—even if it means living in one room or a trailer. The let's-get-married decision, according to an official pamphlet issued by the Society of Friends might mean that both partners would have to work and that parenthood would have to be postponed. It would almost certainly mean a hard life and much sacrifice but it would be the creative life of marriage. The sacrifice and hard work would be shared and it would have rich fulfillments."

The first president of the University of Chicago, William R. Harper, years ago dropped the revealing detail that in the first five years of his family life there were times when a letter could not even be mailed because they did not have enough for a stamp but oh, what a wonderful time they had anyway!

Jesus talked more about the use of money than any other single subject. The parable of the Talents is a story about money, not directly about abilities. Christ also said, "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" (Luke 16:10-12).

Certain basic methods in the financing of homes have been tested through the experience of hundreds of couples. These simple principles, which are fundamentally religious, are the key to a practical money management in our homes.

A) *Spend carefully.* There is no lasting joy in being a miser but when you do spend, get all you honestly can for your money. For instance, in furnishing a home it is better to buy

piece by piece for cash rather than have a house full of junk on time payments. Secondhand stores are for the discerning buyer a source of many advantageous purchases. The courage to live simply is part of the art of staying happily married.

For the first three years of your marriage cancel your charge accounts and pay cash for everything you buy. One of the Devil's tools to destroy homes is the credit used so gleefully by young couples. You probably will have to buy a home, a refrigerator or stove, etc., on deferred accounts but the total of such "easy payments" per month should never exceed one fourth of a month's total income.

Spend money only after both partners have agreed on what is to be purchased. You can get along better without anything than you can get along without each other.

I recall one couple in trouble. She said, "It was a beautiful red hat. I watched it for days in the window. Then they marked it down from \$10.00 to \$9.50 and I just *had* to have it." When she brought it home, he resented the addition of this amount to their already over-stretched charge account and the fight started, soon to become serious enough to bring them grim-faced, to my study.

Part of our problem is that our earning capacity is normally less than our yearning capacity.

This is a time for clear thinking among young couples about gambling. According to our popular magazines the American people each year gamble  $1\frac{1}{2}$  billions at the pari-mutuel race tracks,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  billions with bookies, 6 billions in baseball, hockey and basketball pools, 2 billions on slot machines and such—a total of 14 billions. No accurate figures are available on how much of this gambling is by young married couples but from the number I see who have had their money affairs weakened by such practices, the propor-



tion may be large. For every dollar paid out to winners, the men who operate the gambling syndicates keep approximately four. What fools we mortals make of ourselves!

The last few years we have become acutely aware of the problems of national defense. We are now spending at the rate of about 42 billion dollars each year for the protection of our country and we complain about this. Yet we waste 14 billions each year in gambling. Even the few who win are often ruined by their sudden, unearned wealth.

B) *Save regularly.* I knew an old man years ago who said, "There are just ten dollars a month difference between heaven and hell. Heaven is when you save five dollars a month and hell is when you spend five dollars more than you make."

For years I have recommended ten per cent as the amount to be saved. Those with a large income pay large income taxes and have in general proportionately higher living standards so that very few can save more than ten per cent. Those with small incomes have of course smaller taxes and lower living standards. Some of them have protested that they cannot save any money. A little exercise of their imagination has persuaded many of them that they could do so. "Suppose you were fired?" I say to them. "Suppose also that you went for six months without work even though you tried desperately to secure a job. Then you are offered a job for ninety per cent of what you are now making. Would you accept it? Would you live on it? Certainly! Then cut your salary ten per cent now and save it out of every pay check. In most communities an automatic arrangement can be made with the bank to deduct ten percent from each salary check to be transferred to a joint savings account. That way you never have a chance to spend the money."

John Wesley used to give good advice to young couples. He said, "If a man makes twenty shillings a week and saves one, he is a financial success. If he earns twenty shillings and spends twenty-one, he is a financial failure."

Saving can be overdone. If too large a proportion is laid away, the children may not be able to have the normal advantages, such as music and a wholesome social life. But it has been many a year since I have seen even one couple whose savings plan was too ambitious.

The sources of poverty are deep in our social structure—accidents, improvidence, unemployment, laziness, lack of training, inadequate job opportunities, vice, stupidity and war being only the start of a long list but the poverty we could have prevented by self-discipline bakes a bitter bread. *Regular savings are essential.*

C) *Give generously.* A percentage of the income should be set aside for this. Those who have faith have demonstrated that ten percent for God's Portion means a joy added to their lives. Such families always have money in their Tithe Accounts to answer a worthy call for help. When the annual Every Member Canvass in their church, the Community Chest, Red Cross, etc., appeals come, a reasonable gift is ready. Half of whatever per cent is set aside should be used for the church or synagogue to which you belong.

The Bible plainly teaches that tithing (ten per cent) for others has God's approval. "Bring the full tithe," appeals Malachi 3:10. The approach of Jesus to this problem was to treat all possessions as a trust from God. He did not single out giving for the support of organized religion and call that "stewardship." The way we use all of our money expresses our true character. He made the comment that where our treasures are, there will our hearts be also. He gave His own



blessing to tithing when He said, "These you ought to have done." (Matthew 23:23)

Harry Clark has written a book for use in high schools called, *Life Planning and Building*, in which he advocates that everybody should give at least one-tenth of his money to benevolent causes. Mr. Clark asks, "If a young person begins early to lay aside a definite amount for charitable and religious purposes, how can he then spend the rest of his income in ways which would be at variance with the spirit of his benevolent account?" Money is coined personality, the medium by which we can exchange our labor for what we really want.<sup>26</sup>

With only rare exceptions, the couples who have brought me their financial problems for help, have had very little idea about how their money was really being spent. After some time of guidance the fact emerged with monotonous regularity that they spent more for their own entertainment than for the welfare of others or for the support of their church. We have families in Atlanta, and I suppose they exist in every large community, who drive expensive cars and live in luxurious houses but cannot afford to pay even part of the expense of sending their children to college.

Large variations of income are as destructive of character in ostentatious display as in the grim struggle for barely enough on which to live. The Bible expresses this with beautiful clarity,

Give me neither poverty nor riches;  
feed me with the food that is needful for me,  
lest I be full, and deny Thee,  
and say, 'Who is the Lord?'  
or lest I be poor, and steal,  
and profane the name of my God.

(Proverbs 30:8-9)

D) *Plan a budget together.* Matthew was the husband of a competent young college graduate named Rhea. His father had used money as a means to dominate his wife and without any malicious intent Matthew began their married life in the same way, keeping all the money in his hands and giving small amounts to his wife when she asked for it.

It used to be taken for granted that the husband handled the money. Many modern wives have been earning their living and paying their own bills. Any woman with this experience has a valuable contribution to make to managing the finances. She will not be happy if she has to ask her husband for every nickel she needs.

We are daydreaming if we assume that any two persons are going to agree always on the use of money. I have seen family fights over important issues such as the purchase of a home. I have also watched conflicts over such unimportant details as the color a room was to be painted. Judge George A. Bartlett, based on many years in the Reno divorce court, wrote that bitterness about money was a factor in nine out of ten broken homes.

I had married them a year previously when Bess and Henry came back to my study. At the first glance I could tell this was no "anniversary visit." Both of them plainly were fighting mad. The trouble concerned who was to be named as the beneficiary of his life insurance. Before their marriage he had named his married sister as the beneficiary. She was wealthy in her own right. Bess and Henry had a tiny baby one month old. Bess was indignant because Henry still had not named her as the beneficiary of his life insurance even though she would have been destitute if he had suddenly died.

Before marriage a couple should know what income they will have, list their obligations and prepare a budget. To



each couple I marry, I say, "If you have not already done this, do so as soon as possible. The federal income tax law requires you to keep records of your receipts. Usually it is to your mutual advantage to make a joint income tax return. Keep records and study them together."

Every week one hour should be set aside by the man and wife to talk about nothing but money. I recommend Tuesday evening from eight to nine o'clock. To do this intelligently they need to keep accurate records. Simple ledgers such as those sold in dime stores are adequate.

I recall the bride who on the first of the month following her wedding dismayed her husband by revealing to him for the first time that she was over a thousand dollars in debt. He was reasonable about it and fortunately had the money to pay the bills but he insisted that they come together to my study to get a clear understanding of how finances would be handled in the future. Since then I have always asked both bride and groom to tell each other about any money either owed.

Over the years I have helped scores of young couples set up their budgets. Without exception, those who discipline themselves to live on eighty per cent of their income—setting aside ten per cent for savings and ten per cent for welfare—are able to live better than those who spend one hundred per cent on themselves. They eat better, sleep better, dress better.

A fundamental law of life is involved. Jesus Christ Himself laid down the general principle in these words, "For which of you, desiring to build a tower (house) does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who saw it begin to mock him, saying, 'This

man began to build, and was not able to finish' " (Luke 14:28-30).

Shirley and Frank spent their money as they got it, with no thought of a budget. In the months when no income tax payment or big insurance premium came due, Frank would agree to nearly any expenditure. But when the time came to buy the children's clothes for school there seldom was the necessary money and a long controversy would take place. He accused her of extravagance and she fussed that he "lacked ambition or could earn more money." Neither knew what was being done with the money. Both were confused.

By a budget I mean simply an orderly method of managing the income and expenses. Few people achieve financial harmony without the aid of pencil and paper. The average family that has never had a written budget, if they saw the record in black and white, would not believe the figures. If you want to eliminate money arguments, solve your problems intelligently, regulate waste and raise the living standard of your home—*make a budget*.

Family budgets must be balanced. How can this be done? The main issue lies in the realism of our will. A young minister, given to much late sleeping, went to an older pastor whom he greatly admired and asked, "How do you manage to rise so early? Do you pray about it?" To which the older man replied, "I get up." So in our finances, many couples who whine about spending more than they make, must stop pampering themselves. We know what our income probably will be because the federal government forces us to forecast fairly accurately the amount for our income tax estimates.

I have known homes with an abundance of income where the people involved were acutely unhappy. Certainly, money is not everything but its thoughtful control can give an



awareness of achievement which is part of the art of staying happily married.

Troubles over money may be symptoms of hidden difficulties of a much more fundamental nature. Alice and Elmer had been married two years during much of which time they had engaged in nagging arguments over money. As I listened to them relating the unhappy events I asked myself why this constant wrangling went on.

Why are so many women and men extravagant? With some, it may be that they have never been taught how to manage money. Such was the case with little Harriet. She and Dan quickly responded to some simple suggestions about a book in which to keep their records, a regular hour for a weekly conference about finances and complete sharing of income or expenditures.

But sometimes the issue of extravagance is much more than this. It may be an evidence of emotional insecurity due to disappointment in the marriage. The husband or wife may not have received the sexual or other satisfactions expected. Spending money, even though it involves swollen charge accounts that never can be paid, provides an outlet for their disappointment and feeling of insecurity.

When spending money, he or she becomes a "big shot." The feeling of personal importance is increased. Possessing something new fills a void in such people's lives. Extravagance has often been associated with uncertainty, insecurity and a general disappointment in life.

Spending more money than we make is nearly always a form of pampering ourselves or of attacking someone else. We know what our income is. Many of us are aware also of approximately what our regular expenses total.

I have been puzzled at some of the extreme cases. A young

wife, knowing the fact that her husband was on the verge of bankruptcy, in one month charged over \$6,000.00 in clothing for herself, their two daughters and one son. This was far more than they would need. I have wondered if the twisted channels of the human mind could transform a "will to failure" into making bad matters even worse.



## Questions to Ask and to Answer

*For each to think through "on his own."*

What did I bring to my marriage?

What does the memory of our first declaration  
of love mean now to me?

Are my ideas about making, saving and spend-  
ing money clear to me?

Am I expecting perfection in my mate?

How much do I want to have a happy home?

*For each to tell and discuss with the other.*

What frustrations have I experienced so far in  
marriage?

How can these be kept within manageable  
limits?

What has our sexual experience meant to me so  
far and how can I better communicate this to  
you?

In what ways have I differed with you and do  
you understand why I think the way I do?

So far, what means the most to me about our  
life together?

*For both to consider together.*

What safeguards can we develop against a "third  
party"?

What advantages would come from a family  
budget?

In what ways have we accepted each other?

How have we rejected one another?

Is our affection for each other growing stronger?

## 9

### *How to Live Happily in the Middle Years*

 **M**ANY PEOPLE in the forties lose their enthusiasm for living and enter the fifties with little intellectual or spiritual strength.

In preparing young couples for marriage I sometimes find their own parents facing inadequately the problems of middle age. "How does it feel to have a daughter getting married?" a mother was asked. Her storm of tears and bitter protests were not directed against the fine young man, but were protests against the years she felt were taking away from her the youthful zest for which she longed. She did *not* want to grow old. Each indication she was adding years to her age,



was resented. To many in these peak years I have said, "It's fun to grow older. I'm having a better time now than I ever did when I was younger."

Parents need to grow. Adults can continue to learn. There is a process of growth in parents as well as in children. As the children are growing, the father and mother will also "grow in grace and knowledge."

Both parents need interests apart from their children. Many of their former concerns will continue to enrich their lives. New friendships will naturally form among people who have children of the same age as their own, leading possibly to membership in a Parent's Club. Both father and mother need to discover interests aside from their older children so that the young people may grow into adolescence with as few frustrations as possible.

#### *HOW DO WE HANDLE WANDERING AFFECTIONS?*

One of the most misunderstood subjects is adultery. Here is the carefully worded conclusion of a group of psychiatrists who spent many years in study of what causes wandering affections. "This study has revealed promiscuity to be a problem in interpersonal relationships . . . In most cases the promiscuous behavior appeared to be the result of conflicts, inadequacies or disorganization within the personality. . . . Those who were unable to give love sometimes had, nevertheless, an excessive need for love based on unfulfilled needs of an earlier period. Among those patients who did have more or less capacity for love, this capacity was usually impaired by conflicts which interfered with existing relationships or made the formation of new relationships difficult." "A Psychiatric Approach to the Treatment of Promiscuity," issued by the American Social Health Association.

Prof. William Clark Ellzey describes the struggle of one woman with this old problem, "A woman in her forties fell in love with a man she met on a committee that was set up to plan a series of community musical events. She was the mother of three children and the wife of a prominent businessman in the town. Both husband and wife belonged to a church and could be counted on for support of any worthwhile enterprise. They did many things together and enjoyed themselves as a family. They were happily married, as they looked at their marriage and as the community looked at it.

"When the new love developed the wife was thrown into considerable agitation and confusion. She still loved her husband. She was bewildered partly because of her lack of knowledge that such a thing was possible. She felt terribly guilty and lay awake nights struggling with inner conflicts. Her pain was increased by the belief that love is a sign for marriage only. She wondered if her marriage was a mistake yet much in her relations with her husband were satisfying, and she loved her children dearly. She simply could not understand how it was possible for her to feel as she did about her family and this other man. She suffered for weeks and finally sought help from a marriage counselor. She made sure that he was dependable by writing the American Association of Marriage Counselors for information about whom she might see in her section of the country. (She had read about people who, claiming to be marriage counselors, were not adequately trained, and therefore sometimes damaged marriage relationships more than they helped.)

"During the course of her talks with the marriage counselor she became more aware of the real reasons for her feelings. She learned which of her ideas were just romantic illusions, and which would lead toward real romance. She



discovered that such attraction is normal, and gradually realized that she had been mildly attracted to other men before this experience, though she had never admitted it to herself. As the talks proceeded she began to feel relieved from the intensity of her conflict, and to work herself out of her mixed-up condition. She realized that she was not such a terrible person as she had thought and she became more sure of herself. She continued on the committee and experienced a gradual change of feeling toward the man. Later she remarked that it all seemed just like a dream. She wondered how she could ever have felt toward him as she did.

"Through it all she stuck to her promises made when she and her husband committed themselves to each other before God and those many witnesses. She held on to her loyalty by sheer strength of character. She used her head when she sought help from a skilled counselor about the sort of private family matter that people usually keep to themselves or seek advice about on grounds of friendship, not on grounds of adequate preparation to give the advice. She said afterward that it finally occurred to her that it was as sensible to consult a marriage counselor when her marriage was ill, as to go to a doctor when her body was ill.

"Her husband knew that something severe was threatening her, but gave her support in his love and reassurance that she could handle whatever it was that bothered her. The children were aware that 'mother is off the beam' for some reason. Friends knew that she was disturbed, but she did not make the mistake of confiding in her best friend, 'who she knew would not breathe a word about it.' The man who was apparently causing all the trouble did not understand her embarrassment and self-consciousness in his presence,

and interpreted her interest as enthusiasm for the musical program they were planning.

"Her marriage is a better marriage because of her experience. She is a more ardent wife and a more understanding mother as she contributes toward the preparation of her children for their marriages years later. She is a much happier person with less fear of the future because of her insights and the strength gained through her struggle. She won, where others have been hoodwinked by romantic illusion and tripped by immaturity into breaking up one marriage and falling into the trap of a new marriage that would have little chance of being half so satisfying as the first. She was threatened by lack of knowledge, painfully groping where she needed understanding, shaken by stormy emotions of fear and guilt, and pushed around by romantic ideas of love, but she hung on to her promises and came out on top. The muscles of her morality proved to be strong enough to hold while she used her intelligence. She now knows romance to a measure that is all too scarce among marriages."<sup>27</sup>

### *THE PRESSURES OF EARNING A LIVING GROW HEAVIER*

Another problem of this period is excessive attention to business or profession. Partly because of the pressure of work and partly because of an unconscious desire to escape from the home, men and women easily neglect each other. They may not be conscious of this flight but the basic loneliness that results has brought many men and women to my study.

### *THE NEEDS OF OUR CHILDREN*

A twelve-year-old son running through the kitchen, noticed how tired his mother looked. Putting his arms around



her he said, "Mother, you look like you need to go to bed." She answered, "No, son, I can't rest now. I must finish drying these dishes." He thoughtfully replied, "Let me dry them and you take a nap." Her careless remark—"You'd make me even more work and break the dishes too. Run along and play"—was part of the reason why six years later she was saying, "My children don't appreciate me. I work my fingers to the bone for them and they never try to help." She had taught them not to help.

Children can be a source of constant friction unless both parents come to some mutual understanding of how they are to deal with the children. The success of any home depends on agreement between the parents and a recognition of this agreement by the children. Some time ago Franklin P. Jones wrote in the *Saturday Evening Post*, "Children often hold a marriage together—by keeping their parents too busy to quarrel with each other."

On the other hand, a mistaken sense of loyalty to a child easily brings tragedy to a home. Father or mother taking sides with the child against each other as he grows older, or making decisions without the advice and consent of the other, produces a tug of war that a child will use to play one against the other for his own selfish purposes.

The way to avoid this is to discuss matters in which the child is concerned out of hearing of the child. It is better to let the other parent have the responsibility than to argue before the child. Later the argument can be thrashed out in private. A common loyalty to the real welfare of the child creates a more binding loyalty to each other.

One afternoon on my parish visits a young housewife apologized, "Everything's a mess today. Please excuse the way the house looks. Mike's brother is in the army and his

wife and child are living with us. Also my older brother's wife just left him so I have him and his two kids on my hands." Three families living in one house! Ten persons crowded in a residence with only two bedrooms! During the visit the wife showed how close she was to breaking under the constant strain.

The burden of two broken homes was placed upon a third. Here were difficulties added to the problems that family already had of their own. Unless the adults in these families get organized enough to let the children help we may end up with three broken homes.

Dr. William C. Menninger has said, "I think the best thing parents can do for their children is to teach them how to love. The problem is of course how to do it. I wish we knew how to help children learn how to relate to other people effectively and happily but I have always believed that this was also dependent on whether they were fortunate enough to have parents who taught them how to love—the importance of caring about other people and the rewards it brings to any of us who do."<sup>28</sup> You may well ask, "How?" The only way to teach love is by example. By cultivating our own capacity to love we teach those around us to love, children must *receive* love in order to *give* love. Children live by love even more than by clothes and food.

### PARENTS ARE PEOPLE TOO!

If satisfactory relations are to be maintained, growing children require that the parents continue to grow also. Understanding, mutual appreciation and comradeship prevail when fresh interests and new ideas are welcomed by father and mother.

Parents are often challenged to personal growth by the be-



havior of their children. Their own acceptance of this can be quite difficult! "I guess I need to begin with myself," said a young mother toward the close of our discussion about her child's disruption of their family life. Mabel would not eat at the table with her parents, flatly refused to do anything about the house and went into screaming fits of anger at the slightest refusal by anyone to do her will. I am not always that successful with parents, most of whom dodge the issue that the behavior of their children is related to the parents' attitudes and actions.

The day the first child goes to school is often a crisis for the mother. I have listened to many a tearful complaint, "My little Alice is growing up!" Sometimes I have gently told such a mother, "Be glad Alice is growing. The most serious problems parents face are when they have a child who never matures."

"In really happy marriages I have observed one invariable circumstance: the first concern of husband and wife is still for each other. The exaggerated pre-eminence of the children is often the direct cause for disintegration of the marriage. This deprives the children of what they most need in their young lives—proof positive that a successful marriage can be a reality to which they themselves may look forward with confidence."<sup>29</sup>

James Ellenwood in *There's No Place Like Home* has shared with us an incident of his own family. "It happened shortly after Christmas when the children were younger and had received too many toys. They had retired for the night and I noticed that Elinore was making the rounds of all the downstairs rooms, gathering as she went, every plaything or outer garment that had been left lying around. I did not

sense the significance of it until the next day. Ann asked for her new roller skates, at that time by all odds her dearest possession, and it was then that the bombshell burst. Elinore was very calm, 'I have asked and asked you children to pick up your things and you have been terribly careless. I just can't, after a hard day's work, pick up after all of you. Hereafter everything I find in our downstairs rooms, I am picking up and keeping for one week.' She walked away.

"Ann was heartbroken, Jane raged, I teased for the kids' sakes. But it was useless. The system was maintained for a month and by that time there was no need for its continuance. It is difficult to stand by a long-term punishment after the anger incident to its initial infliction has abated, but Elinore never relented. The results were amazing: neatness, order, care of one's property, less work. You may not believe it, but with all their faults our children simply do not leave things lying around. It affected me, though Elinore did not include me in the system. Even now, when I have worked or read downstairs long after everyone else is in bed, I start for the second floor only to turn around to gather up a scrap of paper or a stray book. Who am I to be privileged?"<sup>30</sup>

#### *CHILDREN CAN BE FUN—AS WELL AS WORK*

If you are a parent, think more about enjoying your child! Relax and have a good time. Being a father is fun. I know. It is also a lot of hard work but all five of the closely-knit bundle of my human needs have been deeply satisfied as I have tried to be a good parent. Laughing together has covered up many a tense moment.

Children rejoice when their mother is home to welcome them as they return from school. Their need for association is strong. Many times I have been visiting a family when the



door would open and a young voice cry out, "Hey, mom, I'm home. Where are you?"

It takes time to cultivate family life. Unless we take the time from other things there will be no time for it. Parents who have no time for their children, wake up when the children are in adolescence to discover that the children have no time for the parents.

What occurs in the home during the earlier years of childhood, when the parents are the main teachers, largely determines what can happen in the later education of the growing boys and girls. Again the Bible speaks to our life situation. "A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother" (Proverbs 10:1).

A clash between the children's gang and the standards of the family is expressed in the two typical objections children make to their parents' instructions, "All the others do it, why can't I?" and "None of the others do it, why must I?"

How children rejoice over freedom for which parents have prepared them! They are ready for the glorious adventure of living.

Parents need never be embarrassed when a minister or other friend calls and the children's books are on the floor or the litter of paper dolls on the table. These signs of normal children's activities are part of the artistry of staying together happily. A home that is neat all the time can't possibly be any fun. Children develop normally through play, learning to think and act for themselves.

The average minister or rabbi could hardly qualify as an expert entertainer but he usually can enter with enthusiasm into a conversation at the dinner table or in the living room. An interesting evening could be planned by a family preparing questions and comments to be discussed with him

by all the family. What a revelation to the spiritual leader!

If you asked your child where he had the most fun and the best times what would be his answer? What would you say to such a question? If the answer is any place other than your own home, something is wrong.

### *HANDLING ENFORCED SEPARATIONS IS A PART OF BEING HAPPILY MARRIED*

The "middle years" are often the time when business or military duty requires the absence of the husband. Frequently the separation of husband and wife is due to modern business practices. Approximately four hundred of the six hundred and fifty wage-earning males in the congregation I serve must travel extensively away from Atlanta. Most of them leave home on Sunday afternoons or early Monday mornings and return late Friday night or sometime Saturday. The little time they are at home itself must be used in large part for the seemingly endless reports required by their companies.

Some of them get home only for alternate weekends, others are with their families only once a month. The worst situation of all was one father who was home only twice a year. For the full months of June and December he came back to his wife and their three children but for five solid months in between he was gone. "How do you manage to do such a fine job of being a husband and father when you are gone like this?" I asked him one day. His answer was, "I write each one of them an individual letter just for him at least once a week. Whenever practical I phone them Sunday evenings at eight o'clock and when I am home, we make each hour count for the most we can."

When Steve returned from military service in the spring of 1962, he told his wife Susan he did not love her any more



but was willing to support her and their child and continue to live in the same house but not share the bedroom. He made a wretched showing at his work and offended his friends by frequent display of his temper. Susan still loved him deeply and when she came to me after several months of this she showed marked anxiety. She felt it would be a mistake to ask him to come.

As she discussed her problem the only hope seemed to be for her to take the initiative in solving their alienation by being so lovable as to win again his affection. She faced the difficulty of being cheerful during his frequent moods of depression. Over several weeks she thought constructively as we sat together about ways to make their home more attractive, to get him to take more interest in their lovely little girl, and to have some fun with his wife outside the home. Several months later, Susan and Steve came together to see me—I could tell by their happy faces that our strategy had worked.

Hoke and Alicia came to me to be married during the strenuous years of the Second World War. I married them at six o'clock one evening and fifty-five minutes later the Western Union operator called me in an effort to reach him with the news that his leave was cancelled and he must report back at once to Fort Benning. They had not told me where they would spend their honeymoon so I could only give the addresses of their parents. In two days the operator reached them. In a week he was on his way out of the country to Europe. They had only forty-eight hours together. He returned two years and three months later. Fortunately, they had a long background of close friendship over many years prior to their marriage but when he came back to Atlanta they had to begin all over again with the adjustments of

newly married couples although they had been married more than two years.

### *THE CHURCH HAS SOMETHING ALL THE FAMILY NEEDS*

Most parents want their children to have the inner resources of a vital religious experience. The art of staying happily married requires that "faith, hope and love" be a living, joyous daily knowledge.

Comradeship with God is a growth over many years, beginning with the earliest experiences of the child. When a mother tucks her baby in bed, she prays, audibly or silently, "Thank you, God, for my child." When a father holds an infant in his arms, he prays likewise, "God, help me to be equal to the responsibility of this baby." Parents, watching their baby together, pray, "Help us, Lord, to rear this child with a strong body and a wise mind." Such children, too young to know what is being done, may feel the peace and harmony that such praying brings.

When the child is big enough to sit in a high chair, he learns to bow his head and be quiet in imitation of his parents as grace is said at the meals. As each child grows older, the father and mother continue to be careful to use simple words, "We thank you, God, for this food." At the suggestion, "Frank, you may thank God, too," the little boy may express himself in his own words.

A young couple with two children asked these questions, "Should my children kneel?" and "Should they fold their hands?" Most children will want to do this if the parents have consistently set the example but the posture should not be forced.

Many children spontaneously offer prayers in their own



words after the prayer which has been memorized. "God, I'm sorry I quarreled with Harry" came after a family fuss. "Thank you, Lord, for my Sunday School teacher" was the remembrance of a happy session at church.

A young couple married by me five years ago came to visit on their anniversary to share with me their success in home-making and to tell about their two children—four and three years old. After listening a while I asked, "Where are you taking the children to Sunday School and Church?" "Oh, we aren't going to take them," she answered, "until they are old enough to choose for themselves, and then they may pick a church of their own."

Do the children choose their food? Do they decide in the winter if they will wear a cap or if they will wear clothes at all in the summer? Will you wait to send them to school until they are old enough to pick one for themselves? If you want to develop their musical abilities you will send them to a piano or voice teacher. How can you expect to start their religious life unless you see that they are educated in this too? What influence will ignoring religion have upon your children's attitudes toward religion? Are you going to insulate their minds against the inadequate and distorted faith television proclaims or the corner gang will discuss? If the parents have no living water to give, the children will be thirsty.

The ancient Jewish family was established upon this Word of God. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when

you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deuteronomy 6:4-7).

The Apostle Paul urgently wrote to the members of the early church about this, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' (this is the first commandment with a promise) 'that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.' Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1-4).

Fellowship with God is a normal part of life, to be cultivated by all the members of the family. Helping Harry with his Sunday School lesson or Bible reading is as natural as helping with school lessons or Scout tests.

Preparing our children so that they can accept the adventure of new experiences is part of the business of parents. Elizabeth and Henry came to see me because of their family friction over the rearing of two-year-old Harry. They were both eager for him to start in our Church Nursery Department but now they were constantly arguing about what to do. For a brief period Harry had seemed to enjoy the Sunday Sessions. Then he flatly refused even to enter the church building. I watched Harry playing with some toys in my study. I suggested to his parents that they allow him time to catch up with himself. I suspected he was just too young though most of our children begin in our Church School when two weeks old. About a year later, Harry came to the Nursery Department gladly.

The best place to learn to understand and love the Bible is in the home where the family read and discuss it as naturally as they do the latest children's books and current magazines. When studied intelligently and regularly the Bible can improve family habits.



Failure to exercise our parental responsibility is sin. Children are given to us by God. He expects us to do the best we can to rear them right. The Lord will not hold us guiltless if we have neglected them.

Recently, two different competent, middle-aged businessmen came with this sort of appeal, "I need help. I'm making all the money we need but we've lost something we once had. My religion means nothing. We haven't prayed in years—not even grace at meals. My wife doesn't want to go to church and I only pretend to enjoy it. Our baby is getting to be a big girl and I'd like her to pray but we aren't even teaching her that. What shall I do?" The answer to such a question is better participation and example by the parents.

Teaching a child to give to the church requires careful planning. At the age of six each child in our Kindergarten Department receives his own box of weekly offering envelopes in which he is encouraged to place his own offering each Sunday. The parents also have individual envelopes. We try to make his regular gift a happy event until the habit of systematic giving has been established. Thus he strengthens his affection by expressing it and learns the joy of achievement by actually doing something that is important.

Death is the inescapable earthly experience for every human creature, usually preceded by a period of physical breakdown. Children need to be given some courage against the terror of death that shocks them so deeply. The poise of their parents, who withhold the excessive expression of their anguish in the presence of the little children, may be part of the process in teaching them that we live in an orderly world. So we fulfill the dream of the ancient prophet Isaiah. "All your sons shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the prosperity of your sons" (Isaiah 54:13).

When parents fail to identify themselves at once in a new community with the local congregation of the religious organization to which they belong, at the same time as they enroll their children in public school, the children draw the conclusion that the school is more important than the church.

Helping our children to respond with reverence to the experiences of daily life is a good way for parents to keep their own religion alive. Many fathers and mothers have told me they learned more of the Bible, teaching and reading it to their children, than they ever did in their own youth.

Sending our children to church is not enough. Parents must themselves be interested if the experience at church is to have any permanent value to the child. "Parents may fool some of the world all of the time and all of the world some of the time but they will not fool their children any of the time. 'My children must go to Sunday School. I think religion is a good thing' remarked a mother recently but she had no time for church activities. Her life was filled to overflowing with social and commercial affairs. She was a foolish woman to think she could by request or command put into her children's lives that which she discounted by refraining from putting into her own character."<sup>31</sup>

In what sort of home did Christ grow to manhood? It was the humble home of a carpenter. In that family were four other sons and at least two sisters. "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? and are not all his sisters with us?" (Matthew 13:55).



## Questions to Ask and to Answer

*For each to think through "on his own."*

Is my faith growing stronger or weaker?

Is it more important to earn the most money I  
can or to work at a job which brings me personal  
joy?

AM I doing my share to make our home a suc-  
cess?

WHAT planned, purposeful reading am I doing?

*For each to tell and discuss with the other.*

WHAT made for happiness in my own parents  
and how can our home be helped by this?

WHAT did I find attractive in you when we met?

AM I satisfied with the relationships to my in-  
laws?

How much obedience did my parents require  
and what do we expect from our children?

WHAT effect is my religion having on me and on  
our home?

*For both to consider together.*

WHAT problems have we experienced and how  
have they been solved?

WHAT continued improvements are each of us  
willing to make for the good of our home?

How can we maintain the best relationship with  
our children?

How can we prepare each other to meet the  
"older years" that lie ahead?

WHAT steps shall we take to keep the sparkle in  
our romance?

## 10

### *How to Live Happily in the Later Years*

 THIS PERIOD begins with the empty nest, when the youngest child has finished high school and leaves home for college or work or military duty.

Many a mature couple has marveled, "How quiet the house is with the children gone." It was fun at first to be alone again. For a while they found satisfaction in doing some of the things they couldn't afford when the children were being reared—both bought a few new clothes, they took a trip together, they fixed the house up a bit . . . and then!

When the last child leaves home, another chapter has closed and a new chapter is begin-



ning in which the husband and wife are thrown together in mutual dependence. Here is when the true "second honeymoon" may begin.

To grow old together gracefully is one of the most rewarding experiences that human life contains. At present we have 16,658,000 people past 65. By 1975 we shall have 22,040,000.<sup>32</sup>

A few older people I know seem to labor under the delusion that if they never think about aging, and especially if no one mentions the word, that the reality itself will disappear. Everybody is getting older.

Look ahead. If life has been worthwhile in the years past, it can be just as meaningful in the years ahead. Now you can do many of the things you've wanted to do for a long time.

Among the quiet pleasures of old age is the serene enjoyment of the "panorama of life without the pressure of active participation."

As we grow older we become more and more obviously the sort of person we have really been in younger years. The mask we have had to assume wears thin. Resentments long cherished in the mind are like water behind a dam, gathering strength, some day possibly to burst in fury over what had been a beautiful relationship. Our hospitals for the mentally diseased have many patients who kept suspicions and fears repressed until they exploded in the later years.

#### *FAITHFULNESS TO THE END IS DEEPLY SATISFYING*

Marriage is similar to all the rest of life in this—nothing matters much without a good ending. How beautifully love starts! Can we keep love lovely? Even a football game can be lost in the last minutes of play!

The average of a man or woman's life does not determine

their lasting influence. Jesus could have spoiled everything in the garden, and the previous years would have been all for nothing. Then we never would have heard of the Sermon on the Mount or the lilies of the field from Him. Some other lips would have had to bear the story of God's love and of His will for human life, if Christ had failed in the last moments to be true. But on the cross He could cry, "It is finished" and by such final faithfulness may any man be sure his life has not been lived in vain.

Let us honor the qualities in a man and woman that "keep their hands to the plow!" When once they've started on the high enterprise of building a home together, what helps to hold them steady?

*First, we rejoice in mankind's possession of a conscience.* As a boy in Missouri I heard a preacher ring the changes on the theme, "Conscience is the court that never adjourns." A phrase of an old poem keeps coming to my mind,

Men who for truth and honor's sake  
Stand fast and suffer long.

Otherwise men and women do not stand fast and suffer. They turn quickly and desert the cause. Jane Addams testified that only those who had a religiously quickened conscience stayed on the job at Hull House as social workers.

There must be some things we could not be hired to do. Under hypnosis the mental traits may be altered. Men and women will behave strangely but they will not violate their conscience—they wake up.

*Second, let us glory in the sense of holy purpose which can lay hold of a man and woman, giving them an allegiance to something greater than either of them individually, or even both of them together—the making of a Christian home*



through which the purposes of God may be achieved in the world.

"How can we stay married?" you ask. Tie your home to something bigger than yourself whose achievement has power to thrill your imagination. In this way parents make for their children a larger loyalty. These children in turn are to carry on the process of creation. Nights are long when children are ill and parents keep on the job in part through devotion to this larger good of the welfare of their children.

All through our country we witness on occasion men working around the clock to restore electrical or telephone service after storms. On a purely dollar and cents basis such work could not be hired, but a city's welfare is at stake. The honor of their firm is involved. A purpose greater than their own individual comfort and convenience lays hold on them and they remain on the job until they drop.

Consider those who are faithful to organized religion in church or synagogue through the long pull of the years and there are many such. This staying power grows out of a loyalty beyond the individual's own particular interests. For forty years I have watched some new members perplex and harm the leadership of religious organizations. These are the people who join with no compelling sense of loyalty to the kingdom of God. Nothing is higher to them than their own selfish interests. Maybe they became active to advance their own business. Sooner or later their inadequate motives collapse. There are far fewer such people in churches than some critics claim. Everybody's motives are mixed to some extent but in all my more than forty years of ministry I have only seen a small handful of members whose *major* motive was self-advancement at the expense of others.

Jesus often dealt with this theme of staying. He told of

the foolish man who started to build a tower but was not able to finish and of the ten girls with their lamps, five of whom were foolish enough not to have the reserve resources to finish their task.

### *IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN*

I recall the story of an older couple who for many years had started the day by fussing at breakfast. A guest in their home, observing the morning ritual of conflict, suggested asking the blessing, which has since been a regular feature of their meals. "Hard words somehow stuck in my throat right after a prayer" was the way the husband reported to me the improvement in the start of their days.

The practical tasks of living often increase in difficulty with age and dwindling strength. These must be faced and conquered or the marriage is to that extent threatened with failure. One problem of the later years comes when the old home must be given up. Ill-health and inadequate income often combine to force the older couple out of a well-loved home.

Old age can be very miserable. Complaints about ill health, selfish demands for service, pettiness, easily disturbed tempers—these are some of the defects that mar what might be the loveliest period of life.

Harry has lived a long time with his wife and came to me recently with bitter complaints about her. As I listened I raised in my own mind the possibility of his being mentally ill, so with no attempt to argue concerning the facts I simply said, "If these conditions exist, what do you really want to do about them?" He sat perfectly silent for several minutes before he replied, "I want to help her but maybe I need help myself."



*AFFECTION MAY CONTINUE ALL THROUGH LIFE*

How can we find a deeply satisfying emotional life after sixty?

I have recently read of a curious young woman who dared to ask a wife in her seventies, "At what age does a wife lose interest in sex?" and received this reply, "I really don't know. You must ask someone a lot older than I am."

Mark Twain said this well for us "Love seems the swiftest, but it is the slowest of all growths. No man or woman really knows what perfect love is until they have been married a quarter of a century."

As we grow older, one of our temptations is to look back with envy. Ask yourselves this question, "Would I really want the same emotional life I had thirty years ago?" An overdose of moonlight-and-roses can be right sickening. Be glad you are now in the quieter, deeper waters of the river of marriage.

*WHAT EVERY CHURCH CAN DO FOR OLDER PERSONS*

The needs of older persons which religion can supply are similar to the needs of younger people, only stronger. As we get older it means much to us to be accepted as persons in our own right, to be respected and treated as individuals. Many older people I know keenly feel their need for status and significance. The cry of many older persons I see is, "Doesn't anybody love me anymore?" They require companionship and association with younger people as well as those of their own age. The loneliness of many people I know in this stage of life is tragic. They can still achieve much even though their accomplishments will have to be adapted to their capacities. Even more, they need the element

of adventure. Life for them is drawing to a close. One of the sure marks of sunset is that little men cast long shadows and little worries raise deep anxieties.

The first White House Conference on Aging met in Washington, D.C., after years of planning, January 9-12, 1961. The purpose was to use the findings and recommendations of the states as a basis to describe the needs and problems of the 50 million Americans who are 45 and older in the fields of health, income, employment, housing, family life and free-time activities and to adopt policies and recommend actions to meet those needs.

The section on religion states, "Religion's concern with human dignity at every stage in the span of life derives from the fact that each individual is created in the image of God. As a consequence, religion seeks to build a living fellowship of believers in which the aging find and share true benefits of being a part of the household of God . . . Within the life of the congregation each older person should be treated as an individual. Each is entitled to responsible membership within the religious fellowship."

Part of the answer to the privileges and problems of the aging is the forming of them into groups in each congregation. Even more important is that each older person be encouraged to *live* all of his life to the full. The recommendations of the White House Conference which seems of greatest importance to religious organizations include:

- 1) "Greatly extended programs . . . to include day centers, clubs, social and cultural activities, outings, travel, camping, library services, informal educational programs, volunteer service by older people to their contemporaries and other age groups, active participation in community



affairs, central counseling, referral and information services."

- 2) That "Older persons be assisted in retaining contacts with younger groups."
- 3) That "Family-centered projects . . . assist older persons to use their leisure more advantageously."

In 1961 a report issued by the Joint Information Service of the American Psychiatric Association and the National Association for Mental Health criticized our mental hospitals for the admission of many unwanted or bothersome oldsters who needed very little professional care or could get it outside. The report stressed community responsibility but omitted any reference to the opportunity of sons, daughters, or other relatives to provide care in their own homes or in a more homelike environment than a mental hospital. Here is one place where the church needs to do some plain teaching and some quick acting to reduce the human misery involved. There are also thousands of old people in Atlanta, and every other large city, who live in cheap rooms because they can afford no better and day after day have no one to talk to and nothing to do.

The fear of death demoralizes many older people. Our churches should include preparation for death among the spiritual values taught.

A critical problem of older couples is caused by the death of one of them. No one else can fill the subsequent loneliness and it is but natural for the survivor to wish that the remaining years may be few. This will be the subject of our thinking together in the final chapter of this book.

## Questions to Ask and to Answer

*For each to think through "on his own."*

How have I responded to growing older?

WHAT interests in life do I have beyond my job?

WHAT new friends have I made recently?

WOULD hobbies help me?

Do I need more exercise?

*For each to tell about and discuss with the other.*

IN what ways do I accept you better than I did when we were first married?

WHAT have I learned about myself which I want to share with you?

WHAT am I willing to do to improve our home?

WHAT do I like about you and how can this be increased?

WHAT are my most important achievements and how have you helped me in these?

*For both to consider together.*

WHAT have been the best moments in our years together?

How can we keep our perspective on the most important values?

WHAT difference does our loyalty to Christ make as we approach retirement?

ARE there any unresolved conflicts in our home?

WHAT adventures are ahead?



*PART IV*

CONCLUSION

# 11

## *How to Live Happily When the Home on Earth Is Broken*

 I HAVE CONDUCTED more than 1,500 funerals in my ministry. Several hundred of these have been of a husband or wife whose mate survived. I have watched with great compassion the problems the widowed have faced, and gained a new appreciation for the dignity and courage possible in a time of crisis. I have also seen what an immense difference a vital Christian faith makes at such a time.

You may have been left to face the remaining years without the one who had become very precious to you. What will you do to express how much he meant to you? If your purpose in



life is to go on to the last day, aware of the love of God, then adventure and joy may still be yours!

Many years ago in my student days we translated a French play whose title and author have long been forgotten but whose essential meaning lingers with me as a permanent part of my own spiritual strength:

Life is so precious to some of us  
That when, as a vase, it has been shattered  
We are humble enough to pick up the broken pieces  
And put them back together  
With such poor skills as human hands may have  
Even when God Himself inspires the labor.

#### *WE TRY TO AVOID THE THOUGHT OF DEATH*

We talk as little about death today as our grandparents did about sex. It is not considered polite today to mention death as a subject of general conversation. Many people try to dodge even the use of the honest old word death by using "she passed away," etc.

Religious faith seems very unreal to many people because of the evil and pain so prevalent in the world—storm and flood, famine and pestilence, disease and death are everywhere, even some day to obliterate what are the precious values of our earthly homes. The answer of Job was in determined faith, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" rising to the insight, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee."

Sickness and pain and death are a normal part of most lives. The way we deal with this aspect of experiences determines our whole outlook in life.

Dr. A. J. Cronin described an experience of his medical practice with an old man whose wife had died:

"I attended a public figure in a north of England town,

who had all his life prided himself on his atheism. He had quarreled with his only daughter—disowned her because she married a schoolmaster who was devoutly religious. Toward the end of his life, when stricken by an incurable malady, a strange change came over the old skeptic. Now that death's shadow lay painfully upon him he was taken less by a change of heart than by an almost passionate desire to justify himself in the eyes of his son-in-law. Time and again he would wander around to his daughter's home to engage the younger man in argument . . . Always he concluded with the remark, 'Don't delude yourself. I'm not repentant. I still don't believe in God.' To which one day his daughter replied, 'But, father, He believes in you.' This simple remark swept away the last of the old man's resistance. It is a thought that might serve for all of us. Whatever we may think, whatever we may do, we are still God's children. He is waiting for us."<sup>33</sup>

#### *SOME PREPARATIONS CAN BE MADE IN ADVANCE*

*Certain intellectual preparations should be made.* Do you each understand the desires of the other about the funeral? Where will the survivor live? Have you talked through the normal concerns which each of you have about the ideas involved in accepting death, each for himself and each for the other? How the survivor meets that grief may depend on the extent to which you are able to discuss this while you are both still on earth. Mental illness becomes a more acute threat in later years. If we all lived long enough, probably some day our mind would be senile. Staying interested in what is around us and preparing ourselves as best we can for the shocks that inevitably are part of living are ways in which we can assure our mental balance.



*Certain economic preparations should be made.* Has each of you made a will? Are all your life insurance policies in one central place, easily available? Do you both have signatures on file in the bank for all checking and savings accounts? Have you discussed the wisdom of having a bank or trust company administer the estate? How much income will each probably have to live on when the other dies?

*Certain spiritual preparations should be made.* Have you both entered into the living experience of religion so that you are prepared so far as possible to meet God face to face? Turn again to your Bible, God's Word on our every human need. Read again Psalm 23, John 14 and I Corinthians 13. They will say something to the depths in you that no mere human word can utter.

#### WE CAN TO A LARGE EXTENT DETERMINE OUR ATTITUDES

Sooner or later, every home must deal with the problem of sorrow. Without love, grief is divisive. There is little about suffering itself to draw us together. Pain easily tends to make us sour. I have watched families fly to pieces when they had no resources outside themselves on which to draw.

Many times when visiting in homes I have seen a child stumble and fall or bump into a chair. Usually he glances at his mother or father. Sometimes by the parent's attitude, the child is taught to accept pain and not to overemphasize it. In a similar way all through life we influence one another to have courage to face reality. Too much sympathy expressed vocally may weaken us greatly.

Thomas a Kempis, a wise and humble man, wrote this, "So long as suffering appears grievous to thee and thou seekest to fly from it, so long will it be ill with thee and the

tribulation from which thou fleest will everywhere follow thee."

But when we turn and face frankly what has happened we summon resources which will aid us in the struggle.

### *SEEK SOME WAY TO USE YOUR TALENTS*

To the very end of our life upon this planet there are opportunities to find ourselves in helping others.

"No matter what happens or who dies, there are yet great truths to be discovered, great causes which need support, countless human beings who need love and leadership. Many of these needy live in every community, in almost every block. A grounding in eternal realities makes it possible to rise triumphantly above personal or moral tragedy or disaster, and to weather the storms of crisis. This is the greatest contribution of religion to the individual or the family."<sup>34</sup>

We are blessed in our congregation by having many people over seventy who have remained intellectually alert. The writing of this paragraph was given added meaning by a phone call just received from one of our dear members now eighty-eight years old, whose husband I buried years ago—who had spoken to our Fishermen's Club, a group of laymen who specialize in evangelistic work. She seems to have found the secret of perpetual youth in her devotion to the church and her absorption in activities which she finds satisfying in themselves. The church needs the wisdom such older persons have and they need the church.

Personality continues to have the capacity to grow through the entire life span. Says Dr. Karen Horney, "The sum total of childhood experiences brings about a certain character structure or rather starts its development. With some persons this development essentially stops at the age of



five. With some it stops in adolescence, with others around thirty, with a few it goes on into old age."<sup>35</sup>

You have much to give to those about you. Experience has made it possible for you to be wise and to do *the most important teaching ever done*—the unspoken influence of the presence of a person who has grown in love and weathered the storms of life.

I recall the remark of an ill husband to his wife after many months of sickness, "I can stand anything since you love me so much." After his death the remembrance of his love for her became an inspiration and she continued to lead an outstanding life of helping others.

#### LIFE FINDS ITS FINAL MEANING IN DEATH

The meaning of our human life is too great to be snuffed out like a candle flame. We grasp those meanings firmly when we face clearly the fact of death, when we express as much grief or anxiety as we honestly feel, when we reinvest our emotional capital so as to create the finest possible return and when our intelligence sustains our highest aspirations.

Time and again I have heard the familiar words with which people reach out to express an effort to respond well to the loss of one they have loved deeply. A few days ago one of our men sat in my study after the funeral of his wife. "Alice would want me to do the best I can through this experience, so I shall try to do my best."

And when the end of earthly, physical existence comes for one of them, what shall the other do? What resources are available? How may the remaining lonely years be filled with meanings adequate to sustain life until at last both are reunited in heaven? Santayana called this "the soul's invincible surmise." Our homes are infinitely happier when we live

together in a definite expectation of our continuity after death.

The Viennese psychiatrist, Doctor Viktor E. Frankl, has faced most of the worst that man can do to man. During his years in concentration camps he tested in the most difficult circumstances of any person I have ever known the ideas which make our human experience valuable. Here is his affirmation, "Death itself is what makes life meaningful. . . . Temporality is therefore not only an essential characteristic of human life, but also a real factor in its meaningfulness."<sup>36</sup>

I had just finished a prayer beside a sick-bed in a home where a long illness was ahead when the patient grabbed my hand tightly as he said, "God has been good to me in letting me have Ethel. She'll never let me down." Again the scriptures have something important to say to us:

Set me as a seal upon your heart,

As a seal upon your arm:

For love is strong as death.

(Song of Solomon 8:6)

Love such as these two had for each other has the quality of eternity about it.

You may claim now in faith the promise of the greatest adventure of all that will come when that strange experience we human beings call death opens the gate that leads to the throne of God.

Here is where our personal needs are met in Christ! His life and teachings, His death and resurrection, His continued presence in our hearts and homes provide the ultimate resource on which we depend.



## *Questions to Ask and to Answer*

WHY do I believe in eternal life?

How can I continue to make new friends?

WHAT steps should I take to protect my health?

DOES the church to which I belong have any  
homes for older persons?

WHAT can I do for others which will help them  
to live more happily?

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